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"THIS IS 'OUR FAREWELL.' I MUST NEVER, NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN," SAID RUBY WITH A HEAVY SOB.

PLIGHTED FOR LIFE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"RUBY, your aunt will arrive here to-day; this letter is from her. I am glad you will not be left alone during my absence."

"Yes," I said, not knowing what else to say, and looked straight at my father across the breakfast-table; but he, absorbed in his letter, made no further remark, so I was left to my thoughts, which were anything save pleasant that bright summer morning.

Outside the birds sang gaily; the trees waved in the gentle breeze, and rustled their boughs as though proud of their green bravery; the flowers lifted their heads in the sunshine, and all creation seemed to rejoice in the glorious June weather.

Yet there was no joy, no happiness in my heart,

though at eighteen girls, as a rule, have few troubles. However, for two years I had been sorely troubled and worried.

My mother died when I was five years old, partly from chagrin at my father losing his fortune, speculating. He tried hard to make up to her the difference, but she drooped and pined for the luxuries and comforts she had been accustomed to.

He worked unceasingly at his profession—that of a barrister; but when this misfortune occurred he was fifty, and it is hard for a man of that age to turn back and begin at the foot of the ladder. Besides, for ten years he had hardly practised at all, having made a large fortune, and so had lost his connection.

He found the struggle terribly severe, and embittered by seeing the wife he idolised fading away before his eyes, and he powerless to keep beside him this well-loved companion. When the end came, my aunt, Mrs. Ellis, hastened to England to relieve my father of the onerous charge of a young child.

He was loath to part with me; still, knowing it was for the best, he consented, and so I returned to Italy with Aunt Ella, and spent fourteen years of my existence abroad in a happy Bohemian sort of life, wandering from place to place; now wintering at Rome, now spending a few months in sunny Florence, and then straying on to Nice.

My aunt was a widow, childless and comfortably off; she was therefore well pleased to have me with her. Yet, though I was fond of her, I found she was not sympathetic; she failed to understand my nature and I hers. She had not the faintest idea how to manage a young girl—at one moment she would be stern and severe, the next indulgent to a degree.

Her régime was altogether so uncommon that I grew up rather wild and somewhat careless of *les convenances*. It is hard for a child to know what is right and what wrong.

I was left too much to my own devices, without any tender guiding hand to point out the shoals and quicksands I ought to have avoided;

but, notwithstanding Aunt's peculiarities, those were happy days I spent with her wandering under alien skies.

The happiest times were when my father joined us. He always came twice a year, sometimes oftener, when he could get away from his business, at which he worked very hard, allowing himself little leisure, trying to retrieve his fallen fortunes.

He spared no expense on my education; it must have been a terrible drain on his slender resources. Childlike, however, I had no idea of the value of money, and while learning music, singing, painting, and languages from the best masters Italy could produce, never dreamt that he was denying himself even common necessities in order that his only child might be accomplished.

I think he was satisfied in the end. I spoke Italian, French, and German as fluently as I did English, and played and sang fairly well.

This queer Bohemian sort of life went on until I was sixteen, and then my father wrote to say he had made sufficient to enable him to have me with him in England, and that he would come to fetch me the following Christmas.

The idea of being with so dear and indulgent a parent gave me unqualified delight, and I longed for December to arrive.

It came at last, bringing him in due course; and before I had thoroughly realised it we had left sunny Italy, with its fragrant orange groves, its blue skies, and balmy breezes, and were domiciled in London.

He had taken rooms in a narrow, dingy street near the Temple, where he had chambers. Town in January to a girl who had spent twelve years in glowing southern lands! I shuddered at the change, and missing the cerulean skies, the golden warmth, and general freedom of life there, began to pine and droop.

My father's loving eyes soon detected the alteration in my appearance, and at last I was obliged to own that I could not live in dull, sunless London.

He was in despair at first, thinking I was going to die there and then on the spot; but two or three doctors having opined that all I wanted was country air and plenty of exercise, he immediately left town, and seeing a charming little cottage on the banks of the Thames near Chelwick took it, and thither we went early in April.

I was delighted with this miniature mansion, with its green porch covered with thick clustering roses and honeysuckle, its trim velvety lawn sloping right down to the river, its tiny, cosy rooms, and general aspect of homely brightness.

I had been ordered to row, so we bought a light skiff, in which I went for a pull every day, occasionally two or three times a day, so fond was I of being on the water, accompanied, as a rule, only by my bulldog Nora, an animal of a singularly ferocious aspect, but mild and affectionate, possessed of a ridiculous snub nose and a particularly black-looking muzzle, which contrasted oddly with her white body.

I delighted in petting and teasing her. She was a splendid water dog, strangely enough, would swim after the boat for miles, and I should have been lonely, indeed, without my canine pet and companion.

At first my father was rather horrified at the cool un-English way in which I went about by myself, but after awhile he got used to it; it was no good, he found, being anything else, as he left for town early in the morning, and seldom returned before seven or eight in the evening.

We only kept two servants, an old man and his wife. She presided over the Lanes and Penates in the kitchen, and managed affairs generally; he dug and delved in the garden, saw to my boat, made himself useful in many ways, and sometimes clothed his meagre body in a fearful and wonderful blue coat, decorated with brass buttons, which had all the appearance of having been designed by Noah's own tailor, and thus gorgeously arrayed would appear at dinner and wait on us.

As, however, he usually managed to drop the potatoes into my lap, spill the gravy over his master's head, and break a few glasses and

plates, all of which unique performances were backed by a running accompaniment of choky grunts and half-suppressed "Oh, lora," we preferred dispensing with his assistance, and waiting on ourselves.

For four or five months my life glided on in perfect, contented happiness in this rural retreat, and then—one morning in the August following my arrival in England—discord disturbed my peace, and feverish unrest took possession of my soul. I remember it well. It was the Sunday after the day on which I reached the age of seventeen; we had finished breakfast, and papa called me into the library, where he was seated in state like a magistrate.

"Do you remember the Drummonds at Devedale, Ruby?" he began, without any preamble.

"Yes, papa," I replied, promptly.

I had only a vague, misty memory of a tall, fair boy playing with me at our old home. Twelve years is a long time to look back, and children so soon forget, but I was rather, not to say very, curious to know what was coming, especially as I knew he had that morning received a bulky letter, part of which he held in his hand, to I had no intention of entering into details, and acknowledging that I remembered very little about them.

"You know, of course," he continued, "that Wilberforce Drummond and I were very intimate friends, like brothers—our affection for one another unbounded!"

"Yes," I replied again. This time more truthfully, for he had often spoken to me about this great friendship.

"Well, when he was dying, we agreed that his son Basil should marry you, and that the subject should not be broached to you until you reached the age of seventeen."

I made no answer to this astounding piece of news, but remained staring at my father, with widely distended eyes.

"The advantages were all on your side then," he went on quietly, not taking the smallest notice of my dismay and astonishment. "You were heiress to sixty thousand pounds, the Drummonds had only a few hundreds a year; now Basil Drummond is Lord Devedale, with a rent roll of thousands, and—"

But here I broke in, unable to control my anguish at the prospect of having to marry a lord, with—

"Why, why, papa, did you engage me to a nobleman when you know how republican I am, and how much I hate titles!"

"My dear," he rejoined, "Basil had no title when this engagement was arranged, and was simply Mr. Drummond. He was left twenty thousand a year by an eccentric old godfather, on condition that he took his name. Four lives stood between him and the Devedale title, but the last, a little boy of five, son of the late lord, fell into the lake in the park three months ago, so Basil is now Lord Devedale, with another ten thousand a year, and you will be "my lady," he concluded, rather abruptly. Still regarding me at the same time with considerable satisfaction, a feeling I was far from sharing.

As soon as I could I escaped from the library, and instead of going to the quaint old church, as was my wont on Sunday mornings, retired to a small summer-house at the extreme end of the lawn, near the river, and sat there for several hours reflecting on "the lottery of my destiny," which "barred me the right of voluntary choosing."

Few women, I think, care to have their husbands chosen for them. English girls are always allowed so much freedom in the way of choosing partners for life, and I had been brought up so strangely, left so entirely to do what I pleased, that I rebelled fiercely against this arranged engagement, and determined to tell my father that I could not, and would not marry young Drummond. But somehow or other my courage always failed me when I spoke to him on the subject. He seemed so thoroughly contented and delighted at the prospect of my becoming the wife of his old friend's son that I had not the heart to tell him decidedly that the idea of having my future husband chosen in this fashion was revolting to me, and

that I could not agree to it, but only brought forward paltry excuses, which he dismissed very quickly. Once I suggested—

"Perhaps Basil would not care to marry me!"

But he had replied that Basil loved his father too well, and was far too obedient and dutiful a son not to agree readily to what he knew was his father's earnest wish; and there was a ring in his voice, and a look in his eyes, which quelled my turbulent spirit, and I never again openly dared to rebel, but nursed my grief secretly, and ended by positively hating the name of Devedale.

When my father first broached the subject to me he said Basil would be in England soon, and come to us. Yet days lengthened into weeks, weeks into months, and November had fairly set in before we heard from him; then he wrote to say he had been very ill, and was ordered to pass the winter in Italy. There he remained long after the winter was over, sending all sorts of excuses for not coming to us.

After awhile it began to dawn faintly on me that this promising young scion of nobility was quite as much averse to the marriage as I was, and the idea of being forced on a reluctant bridegroom added greatly to my unhappiness. His last excuse was the most extraordinary. Early in April we received a letter from him bearing an Australian post-mark. He had, he wrote, been wrecked while yachting, and the steamer that picked him up went straight to Melbourne, so he had been obliged to go too; but he intended to return at once, and would be at Devedale early in August, where he hoped to meet us!

Papa was satisfied with this lame explanation—I was not. The knowledge that in two months I must meet this "laggard in love"—meet him, too, with smiles and fair words while hating him in my heart, weighed down my spirits, and made me find even the June sunshine an empty mockery.

Papa was leaving to go on circuit for some weeks. That bright summer morning a short time before he started, he said—

"You will be ready to go to Devedale on the third? I shall not be back before, so have everything ready. You don't mind the marriage now? You are quite reconciled to it?" he added, eagerly, gazing at me steadfastly.

And I, looking at the careworn, lined face of the parent I loved so well, and thinking how he had toiled and slaved to make money in order that I might be fitly educated for the position he wished me to hold, had not the courage to tell him of my reluctance and miserable misgivings—to crush this hope which had supported and encouraged him through many weary days of work and self-denial, so hugged my silent sorrow closer, and, murmuring "Yes," sent him on his journey happy and contented.

CHAPTER II.

It was late in the day when aunt arrived. She strode in like a life-guardman, carrying, as she invariably did when travelling, several brown paper parcels in one arm, and in the other Fido, an obese, wheezy monster of a dog, possessed of a corpulent body and a mere button of a head, altogether a most unlovely object, but greatly prized and tenderly cherished by my antique relative.

After having favoured me with a frosty peck on either cheek by way of a salute, she sat down, and began to divest herself of some of her multitudinous wraps. I watched with great interest. Though it was the middle of summer, and intensely hot, aunt had at least three woollen shawls and two silk handkerchiefs over her ample bosom and shoulders.

All this muffling gave her rather a herculean appearance, which fetched Burgess tremendously. He being a little wizened man, bearing a greater resemblance to a dilapidated, half-starved orang-outang than anything else, couldn't take his eyes off her, and kept coming back again and again to the room in which we were, on some pretext or



other, to gaze once more on this Brobdingnagian stranger.

Her head was decorated with a bright pink bonnet, garnished with several large blue flowers. This extraordinary headgear fascinated me. Involuntarily my eyes travelled back to it, and aunt, mistaking my looks of astonishment for admiration, stooped so that I might get a better view of it, and exclaimed, in a loud and triumphant voice,—

"Thirty-five francs at the Maison Dorée. Isn't it lovely, my dear?"

"Yes, very lovely," I muttered, feebly, and then suggested that we should adjourn and prepare for dinner.

On our return to the dining-room we found Burgess in attendance, arrayed in the blue coat.

"Very extraordinary person," observed Mrs. Ellis, on one occasion when he was out of the room.

"Yes," I assented, timidly; "but we can't afford to keep anyone better."

"Then I shouldn't keep a manservant at all," responded my candid relative tartly, "if I could not have something better than that old fright to wait on me."

I did not reply to this remark, but occupied myself with reflections on the general ingratitude of mankind; for Burgess had evidently a great and sincere admiration for aunt's elephantine proportions.

Everything went on well until nearly the end of dinner. Burgess had not, for a wonder, made any of his horrible mistakes, and I was in hopes that all would pass off smoothly, when suddenly, seeing that aunt had nothing on her plate, he made a lunge at a dish of strawberries, and in doing so, caught his sleeve in her cap, whirling it off with such violence that the "front" of auburn curls she wore, which was a closely-guarded secret, slipped back, and disclosed the real state of affairs.

I hardly blamed him. Aunt always went in for too much top-hammer, and on this occasion her cap, or rather bonnet—for it partook more of the nature of the latter article than the former—was a perfect triumph of floriculture, and stood nearly a foot high.

With rage gleaming in her eyes she rose and stalked out of the room; while I, seizing the unlucky cap, and favouring the delinquent with a withering glance, rushed after her and tried to appease her just wrath.

But in vain. For the rest of the evening I heard nothing but animadversions on the imbecility of old people, which was slightly amusing, as Burgess was at least ten years her junior.

The sun shining in at my window, with his bright golden beams, woke me early the next morning. Delightful for a row, I decided; and though it was only five o'clock I jumped out of bed, and dressing quickly hurried down, and out to the garden, where Nora, chained to her tub, greeted me with many cries and barks.

Setting her free, I proceeded to the boat—Bully taking her usual place on a cushion in the stern—and seizing the sculls I pulled steadily up against stream, towards Richmond.

I had a great desire to get to Kelpie Island, notwithstanding the strong tide. I had several hours to do it in, as aunt never breakfasted until half-past nine or ten, so I could take it easy, which I did, thoroughly enjoying the cool, fresh breeze, which rendered the warm June day delightful, and listening to the rapturous song of the lark thrilling far beyond the clouds.

The peaceful beauty of this early morning lulled me into a state of dreamy forgetfulness, and after a time my troubles seemed to float away on the glittering waters, and a delightful feeling of happy content came over me.

But at last, awakening to the fact that I was going backwards instead of forwards, I gave way vigorously, to make up for lost time, missed striking the water, and fell back, jerking the sculls out of my hands.

When I recovered my equilibrium I found I was careless in the middle of the river, floating "down stream." My sculls leading the race by about three boats' length.

It was not a pleasant predicament. I felt rather frightened at first, and looked round in dismay for assistance. There was not a creature to be seen anywhere.

So after a time, regaining my presence of mind, I took the stretcher, and tried by paddling with it to keep my skiff a little straight. It was hard work; and, feeling anything but comfortable, I began to wish devoutly that I had not come out, when suddenly round a curve shot a light, out-rigger boat, rowed by a young man in the orthodox white flannel.

As it neared I called loudly, and then, fearing he might pass without seeing me, waved the stretcher frantically.

"I beg your pardon!—what is it?" he asked, as he pulled alongside, an amused smile on his lips—I suppose at my flushed face and frantic gestures.

"My sculls!" I replied, eagerly. "Could you get them for me?"

And I pointed to where they were floating leisurely down.

"I will try," he answered, with a cheery laugh, rowing away hard in chase of the fugitives.

The bend of the river hid him from sight; and after a time, which appeared to me interminable, he returned in triumph with the sculls.

"I am afraid I have been a long time," he remarked, as he handed them to me; but it is such risky work moving in these light boats."

"Not at all," I replied, graciously. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Please don't try. I am only too happy to have been able to assist you. How did you manage it?" he added, after a moment, with a quizzical look in his dark blue eyes. "I suppose you were pulling too hard? It is rather rough work for a lady going up against stream."

"Yes," I assented; "I think that was it."

"Do you often come on the river?" he queried next.

"Yes, every day," I responded, eagerly, not wishing him to think me a cockney unaccustomed to boating.

"Do you live near?" he went on. "If you will allow me I will scull down with you, and see that you do not meet with any more accidents."

"Over there," I said, pointing Chiswick way.

As we pulled leisurely towards home I took the opportunity of studying his appearance. He was, as far as I could judge, above middle height, splendidly built, his broad shoulders and deep chest shown off to perfection in the tight-fitting jersey he wore.

His features were straight and clear cut, his hair fair, close-cropped at the back, but clustering in thick curls and rings over his forehead; a long tawny moustache drooped over his mouth, which, with his short hair and erect bearing, gave him a military look.

The chief charms of this handsome face were the expression and the eyes—deep blue eyes, clear, candid, and honest, that met mine steadily, and unflinchingly.

I felt quite sorry when we reached our miniature mansion, and saw Burgess waiting to help me ashore.

"I hope we shall meet again under happier circumstances," said my new acquaintance, with a smile and a bow, as he rowed away.

Aunt was not down, so I had time to arrange my rather dishevelled attire before she appeared.

At breakfast she began a discussion on the relative merits of the Vanittarts and the Corris.

"Yes," she observed, with a disparaging look at my slender figure, "you certainly are like your mother's family. We Vanittarts," here she cast a complacent look over her ample proportions, "are all fine people."

Looking at her double chin, huge body, and general largeness, I offered up a silent thanksgiving that nature had been kind enough to cast me in the mould of the Corris, and not in that of the Vanittarts.

"At one time," she continued, "I thought you were going to be rather pretty, in a *petite* style; but now with that extreme pallor, and

your hair cut short, you look like an ugly boy," and having announced this flattering fact, she rose from the table and went into the garden.

I was intensely disgusted at her speech, being rather proud of the tiny rings and curls of black hair that clustered all over my head, and far from thinking my pale face and brown eyes masculine-looking.

Then I fell to wondering if my acquaintance of the morning thought me ugly and boyish.

I did not tell aunt of my adventure. I knew she would worry and lecture terribly about it, and perhaps forbid me to go on the river again until papa came back. So I held my peace, and kept my little secret to myself.

The next morning I longed to go for a pull, but maidenly prudence forbade it. If I were to meet the handsome stranger, I reflected, he would be sure to think I had come out to see him. Therefore, I remained at home.

After breakfast, as usual, we went out to the garden, and presently, coming slowly down, I saw my good-looking friend, his eyes fixed on our lawn.

The moment he saw me he smiled, and lifted his hat, both of which performances were luckily unobserved by aunt, who had her back to the river, and was occupied cutting creamy gloire de Dijon.

The following morning, to my excessive disappointment, was wet, and it was not until the third morning after my adventure that I was again on the river.

I had not gone very far when a boat shot out from under the willows, the occupant of which I recognised as my rescuer.

"I thought we should never meet again," he began, laughing pleasantly, and displaying a fine set of teeth. "Of course you weren't out yesterday?"

"No," I murmured, bashfully.

"I was," he continued, "but hardly hoped to see you. Are you going far this morning?"

"Not very far—to Kew or Richmond, I think."

"May I come with you?" he queried, eagerly.

I assented, and we pulled away steadily, in the course of a short time becoming extremely good friends. When returning, as we neared home he asked,—

"May I not know your name?"

"Oh, yes," I answered readily. "I am Ruby Vanittart."

"What!" he cried, with considerable astonishment.

"A funny name isn't it?" I said, feeling for the first time in my life rather abashed of my romantic cognomen.

"A very pretty one," he replied.

"And yours?" I asked.

"Dick Hetherington."

Then we said good-bye, and he rowed away.

CHAPTER III.

A MONTH passed—passed like a delicious dream.

For the first time I loved, loved devotedly, and there is really "nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream." I could not conceal the fact from myself that Dick Hetherington possessed my heart solely and wholly. Every morning I met him, and these meetings became a necessity, until at last I could not pass a single day without seeing him.

At first I struggled against my infatuation, and said I would not go on the river, but Dick begged for one more morning, and the imploring look in his blue eyes conquered me. I went out not only once, but many times. He had never actually spoken of love to me, and yet I knew I was not indifferent to him; he showed such pleasure whenever we met, and pressed me so eagerly to meet him again and again.

The dream had been perfect, delicious, roscate; the waking was sombre indeed.

A letter came from my father saying that in two days he would be with us, that everything must be ready for us to start for Devedale, as my intended husband would be at the Court,

and would come over to my aunt's house the evening after our arrival.

The news fell upon me like a crushing blow. In my new-found happiness I had nearly forgotten my engagement, only remembering it at times when I was alone, and comforting myself then with the reflection that something might occur to prevent my marriage.

But after reading the letter, I knew the terrible time had arrived when I must face my reluctant suitor, and that very little, or nothing, could happen in two days.

Two days! What a weary refrain my heart made of those words, and it was in a numbed, wretched sort of way that I set out on my usual morning excursion. Dick was waiting for me at Kew.

"What is the matter, little woman?" he asked, tenderly, gazing with considerable astonishment at my white face and heavy eyes.

"Nothing, Dick," I replied, "at least, nothing that I can tell you about here."

"You are not well, Ruby. We will stop at Richmond and stroll through the park. You must not row much to-day."

Wearily I assented to this, and, landing, we went into the park.

It was a glorious July morning. The intense heat of the sun tempered by a cool, refreshing breeze, the blue cloudless sky one vast azure curtain, the glowing summer air alive with the song of wild birds, warbling forth a flood of delicious melody; the soft dew sparkling in the morning sun, as it lay thickly on the green velvety sward. Yet I was too wretched to be able to appreciate the beauties of nature.

"Now, what is it, darling?" queried Dick, drawing my hand through his arm.

"I am going away," I jerked out, tearfully.

"Going away!" he repeated. "When?"

"To-morrow!"

"To-morrow, my love, my dearest!" he said, tenderly, drawing me close to him. "You cannot, must not go, until I have told you how much I love you—until I have your sweet assurance that you will be my wife."

For a minute I yielded to his fond embrace, then drawing away I sobbed, "I cannot."

"Cannot? why, Ruby, why? I know you love me, it is useless to deny it. Your eyes betrayed you long ago."

"Answer," he continued, as I remained silent, "do you hate me?"

"No, Dick; a thousand times no," I sobbed, breaking down altogether, and hiding my face on his shoulder; "but I am engaged—going to be married to some one else."

"Going to be married! To whom? Tell me his name!"

"Lord Devedale," I murmured, faintly.

"Devedale! And do you care for him?"

"No," I answered with considerable energy, in the midst of my tears. "I have never even seen him. I hate the sound of his name, and wish heartily that such a person did not exist."

"Rather rough on your future spouse," I heard him mutter. "Tell me all about it, pet," he said aloud, and so as we paced slowly over the springy turf I told him all my sorrow.

When I had finished he said,—

"You must not marry if you don't like him. Surely your father would not force you into an unwelcome marriage!"

"He must never know that I dislike it," I replied, dearly.

"You cannot, will not, sacrifice yourself, and me?" he added in a low tone.

"Oh!" I cried, miserably, "don't tempt me. I must marry him."

"Perhaps you will like Devedale when you see him."

"No, Dick, I never shall, never can care for any one but you, and I looked up lovingly at the frank, handsome face I had learnt to love so dearly.

"Then I must leave you!"

"Yes," I moaned.

"Will nothing make you give up this sacrifice?" he queried, passionately.

"Nothing," I answered, hopelessly. "It would break my father's heart."

"Perhaps your intended won't care for you,

Yet I am afraid there is very little chance of that, he is such an admirer of pretty women."

"Do you know him?" I asked with some astonishment.

"Yes, very well."

"And why didn't you tell me you knew him?" I demanded, rather indignantly.

"Well, darling, I wasn't aware that the subject would interest you, as this is the first time you have mentioned his name to me."

Knowing this to be the fact, I remained silent for some minutes, and then asked what sort of a man my future husband was.

"Oh, like the general run of men," answered Dick.

"Is he agreeable?"

"Pretty well," replied my lover, somewhat reluctantly.

"Is he handsome?"

"Well," said my companion, with curious hesitation, "I am not a good judge of masculine beauty, and—and—tastes differ so much. I can tell you, though, who is charming, and that is your little self, pet," he added, clasping me suddenly in his arms, and kissing me fondly.

"You must not, Dick," I cried, upbraidingly, freeing myself from his embrace.

"I think you might let me have a last kiss," he said, reproachfully.

"I shall tell Devedale he is the luckiest man I know, having such a dear little wife provided for him."

"Tell him! Why, where will you see him?"

"He has often asked me down to his place, so I shall go now. It will give me a chance of seeing you again."

"You must not come down there, Dick," I cried, fearfully, pleased to think I should see him once more, yet knowing that it would make it harder for me to do my father's bidding if I saw him often.

"I will only ask you to see me once, dearest," he pleaded. "The evening after you arrive meet me at the stile at the end of Devedale Wood. I will never ask you again if you don't wish it."

"I mustn't. I daren't do it, and it would be so dishonourable."

"Do, love," he urged, "only this once."

"But Lord Devedale—he may come with you," I expostulated, struggling feebly to resist the sad, pleading look in those dear eyes.

"There is no fear of that. He generally has a cigar in the library after dinner, and I swear it shall be the last time Dick Hetherington asks you to meet him."

And so I yielded, and promised to meet the man I loved near the house and in the woods of the man who was to be my husband and whom I hated.

I was very silent as we rowed back. I was beginning to realise how overpowering was the love I bore Richard Hetherington, how empty, colourless, and dreary my life would be without him, and fiercely every feeling within me rebelled against my miserable fate. The gay flowers, the warbling of the joyous birds, the bright sunshine—what a mockery it all seemed.

"The summer's day" was indeed "a winter's night" to me, and it was with a pang of unutterable anguish that I watched him for the last time as he sculled away rapidly towards Putney. I staggered to the house. The door stood open, I passed in, went up to my own room, and flinging myself on the bed wept out my heart's agony the whole day through.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning my father returned, bringing with him Beesie Tremaine, an old playmate of mine. I was glad to see her. The mere sight of her round, apple-checked face did me good. She was a loving little thing, and would, I knew, be a sympathetic listener to all my woes and sorrows.

Her gay prattle enlivened the journey, and kept me from brooding over my misfortunes. As we were driving from Devedale station to aunt's house, through the lovely Devonshire scenery, we passed a magnificent place, with park-like

grounds, long, shady avenues of oaks and elms, and herds of graceful deer.

"What a beautiful house!" exclaimed Beesie.

"Whom does it belong to?"

"That is Devedale Court," replied my father, with great complacency. "Ruby's future home."

"Lucky girl!" she cried, "how I envy you."

"Do you?" I replied, indifferently, and fell to wondering if she would envy me if she knew the load of misery I bore, and what agony it was to me to appear cheerful before my father.

I determined the sacrifice should be complete, and that he should not guess my wretchedness.

The next morning it poured in torrents. A terrible dread seized me. I might not be able to go out that evening and meet my lover for the last time. I knew, only too well, how hard this last farewell would be, and yet nothing on earth would have induced me to forego this "sweet sorrow." The thought of seeing him again filled me with a rare joy, and I resolutely thrust aside all thoughts of the future, and revelled in the anticipation of once more looking into those frank blue eyes, that were dearer to me than aught else on earth!

Towards the afternoon, as Bees and I were discussing our tea in my own particular room, it cleared a little.

"I think you will be able to go to Devedale Wood," she observed.

"I hope so," I replied, drawing near the window, and looking out over the fair landscape, across the fields of waving golden grain, to where the wood stood out—a patch of green leafage.

"And do you really love this man so well," she continued, linking her arm in mine, "that you would willingly give up a title and that beautiful place we passed yesterday to be his wife?"

"Willingly. Were it not for my father I shouldn't hesitate a moment in choosing between them. How I wish I could change places with you," I added, "and be free."

"I wish you could, I'm sure!" she cried, vivaciously. "I should like to be 'my lady,' and mistress of Devedale Court. Besides, they say he is very handsome."

"If he were Adonis himself," I replied, wistfully, "it would make no difference to me. I hate him!"

"But you will have to be polite to him at the dance to-morrow night."

"Yes," I assented, wearily. "I wish, indeed, aunt had not asked all these people to witness my misery. It will be hard to play the part of a happy bride with an aching heart like mine."

"Poor Ruby," she said, kissing me, "I am so sorry for you. I must run away now, or I shall not be ready for dinner."

At the conclusion of that meal I rose abruptly from the table, and passing through the hall, took a wrap from the stand, and proceeded to the place of meeting.

I hurried down the long drive, eager to reach the tryst. The rain had ceased entirely; it was a beautiful evening. The sun had sunk to rest behind a gorgeous mass of purple and gold clouds; the bright moon shone on the lovely, misty landscape, lighting up the blue sky, flecked here and there with tiny silver clouds, like a lamp. Sweet and refreshing were the odours floating up from the damp rain-swept earth, and there were few signs of the past gale.

As I reached the wood I saw Dick leaning on the stile waiting for me.

"You have come, then, darling!" he said, as I neared him.

"Yes, Dick. Did you think I would not?"

"I wasn't certain, pet. I thought you might be unable to get out."

"Nothing would have stopped me," I replied.

"This is 'our farewell.' I must never, never see you again. Oh! Dick," I added, with a heavy sob I could not smother.

"My poor child," he murmured, clasping my hands with both his. Yet the stile was between us, and he made no attempt to get over and come nearer.

"Will nothing induce you to give up this marriage?"

"Nothing," I answered firmly; but a great tear

rolled down my cheek and fell on our clasped hands. "My father has promised me to Lord Devedale, and I must marry him, even if I hated him ten times more than I do."

"Ruby," he said, after a pause, "I don't believe you really love or pity me."

"Oh! Dick, Dick," I cried at these cruel words, wrenching my hands from his clasp, "you know I love you far better than anything else on earth," and, covering my face, I gave way to the choking sob, that I could no longer suppress.

"Poor darling," he said, tenderly, "don't cry so."

"I wish I was dead, could forget and be forgotten," I rejoined, with inexpressible weariness.

"Will nothing I can say alter your decision? Nothing make you break this hateful bond?"

"Nothing; I am bound in honour to Lord Devedale."

"I envy him. He will have a true, brave little wife," then snatching me to him, he kissed me passionately, exclaiming, "Good-bye, my sweet, my love, I dare not stay, or I shall be cowardly enough to try and break your good resolutions;" and releasing me he strode away.

I stood for a moment—silent—in the starry gloom, then realising, with a terrible, agonising pang, that he was leaving me for ever; that never again in all the long years that lay before me should I see that beloved face, I stretched out my arms with an imploring gesture, and cried, "Dick, Dick, come back to me," but he did not turn his head, did not seem to hear me, and I was alone beneath the starshine, overpowered with misery.

"You look lovely, Ruby."

"Do I, Bess?" I replied, indifferently. "It doesn't much matter how I look."

It was the evening of aunt's dance. I stood before the glass, in clouds of white satin and tulle, and could not help seeing that, in spite of my pale cheeks and heavy eyes, I looked pretty. I don't know how the hours passed, after I parted with my lover. I moved about in a dull, stupefied sort of way, was heart-sick and wretched, and indifferent to everything. When aunt's maid told me my father was asking for me I went downstairs calmly, knowing that at last the dreaded moment had arrived, when I must face the man who had made my life desolate.

I felt, however, relieved on entering the brilliantly lighted ball-room to find they were not there. Hearing voices in the conservatory I went thither, feeling glad that this meeting would take place in that cool dim retreat. My cheeks could hardly grow whiter, yet I did not wish my father's keen eye on me, beneath the full glare of the chandelier. He must know nothing of the anguish of my soul.

As I entered, he turned and said, "Lord Devedale, Ruby."

I put out my hand without lifting my eyes.

"Will not my bride give me one glance from those bright orbs?" said a voice I knew only too well—and looking up, I found myself face to face with—my lover.

"What is the meaning of this, Dick?" I cried, despairingly.

"It means that I am Lord Devedale," he replied, "your intended husband."

It flashed across me like a ray of light—Richard Basil Drummond Hetherington—his godfather's name was Hetherington. Finding out who I was, he had concealed his identity to try me, to see if I were mercenary, ready to marry him for his wealth and title, for the good things of this world with which he could endow me, and a mighty wave of wrath surged over my heart as I thought of what I had suffered on his account, the hours, days, weeks of agony I had endured, and from the pain and misery of which he might have saved me, had he not doubted and mistrusted me.

He made a step towards me, holding out his hands, a pleading look of longing in the deep blue orbs, and as our eyes met, and mine rested on the fair, debonair face, which had been so inexpressibly dear to me, the old, mad passion for an instant resumed its sway over me, and I felt

inclined to fling myself on his breast, and sob out my joy at discovering that my lover and my intended husband were one and the same person.

But pride forbade, and wounded love and vanity held me back, made me stand like a statue, with tightly clasped hands, dilated nostrils, and lowered lips. Wilfully blind to the pleading look, the outstretched arms, eager to encircle me in their warm embrace.

CHAPTER V.

"RUBY," he said, at last, after a painful silence, "have you no word of greeting for me?"

"None," I answered, icily.

"Are you angry with me?"

"Angry!" I repeated, with a bitter laugh, that sounded strained and unnatural even to myself, "angry! Is that the right term to use? Is that all that a woman treated as I have been would feel! Angry! Good Heavens! have you any idea of what I have suffered—suffered simply that your pride and mistrust might be satisfied?"

"Ruby," he ejaculated, "do you think I would cause you an instant's pain—willingly—"

"And have you not?" I cried, fiercely, interrupting him. "Have you not given me many instants, nay, hours of weary anguish! When I think of what I have gone through, and that you with a few words might have saved me all that sorrow, I feel—"

I stopped here, words failed me, but I began again,—

"Do you remember that day in Richmond Park, how coolly you listened to my miserable story, how unfeelingly you witnessed the agony you could have, and yet you would not, relieve; and, worse than all, how you tempted me to be false to my engagement?"

"And will you be false to that engagement now?" he queried, in a low tone.

"Need you ask?" I returned, with cold contempt.

"What is the meaning of all this?" demanded my father, who had been regarding us silently in blank amazement.

"It means that Lord Devedale and I have met before—in fact, we are, or rather we were, excellent friends."

"When, where, how did you meet? This is extraordinary."

"You must ask his lordship for the explanation," I sneered, indicating him by a wave of the hand, "he, possibly, will be able to explain many things which are utterly incomprehensible to me; notably, how a man who professes to love a woman ardently, devotedly, with his whole heart and soul to the exclusion of every other object can deliberately and heedlessly inflict pain on her; also, why a nobleman, when he accidentally meets the girl to whom he has been betrothed since early childhood, and whom he has not seen for years, should think it necessary to drop his title and appear as plain Mr. Hetherington. Doubtless, his explanation will satisfy you. I hardly think it will me, as the man I knew as Dick Hetherington seems to me to be entirely different from Lord Devedale. Therefore, I will leave you to hear the story alone."

And turning, I swept out of the conservatory with great dignity and head erect, yet feeling that a little more and I should burst into tears at this ending to my love dream—my summer idyl, that had been so sweet, so poetic, and now was over and done with for ever more.

"Ruby, come back. I insist upon you remaining here," called out my father, imperatively; but I swept on into the ball-room, for I saw aunt at the further end, welcoming the first arrivals, and I knew I was safe.

"You look very well to-night, child," she said, at last, when a slight lull in the steady flow of the incoming guests gave her time to take a look at me.

"Do you think so?" I said, nonchalantly, and feeling however much I might wish to return the compliment I could not truthfully do so, for her costume was simply hideous. It consisted of a voluminous apple-green silk, bedizened with her

favourite flowers, pink roses, and flounces of white muslin. This antique garment was low-necked and short-sleeved, and revealed to disadvantage her elephantine throat and arms. Round the former was clasped a lovely pearl necklace, white as new-fallen snow, and which contrasted unfavourably with the highly-coloured skin, while over the latter were drawn a pair of yellow kids, at least a size too small, which had burst here and there, and disclosed the pinched flesh beneath.

Her head was a mass of pearl pins, gigantic roses, and lace lappets, which flopped and fluttered at every movement, and her general appearance was extremely ludicrous, especially when she curtsied to the county grandees, bending nearly to the ground, and recovering an upright position only after a desperate struggle, and many away-fings to and fro, and grabs at the Moorish scarf she wore over her shoulders, which showed a decided inclination to slip off, and reveal all the beauties it was intended to modestly hide.

"Yes," she continued, with an approving nod, that set all the lappets a-fluttering, "you have a colour, and it's an improvement; shows up your eyes, you're too pale as a rule."

"Am I?"

"Of course you are; you look deathly sometimes."

"Well, I don't to-night," I rejoined with a mirthless laugh, as I caught a glimpse of my face in a mirror opposite, and saw the angry red spot that burned with feverish heat on either cheek.

"No. You are the prettiest girl in the room."

"Hardly that," I expostulated.

"Yes, you are," she declared obstinately, "there isn't any one here to come up to you, and I'm almost sorry you are engaged."

"Why?" I asked, looking up, and taking for the first time some interest in the conversation.

"Because Allan Archdale has been asking who you are."

"Oh!"

"Do you remember him?"

"I don't think so."

"You ought to," he used to bring you heaps of pralines and chocolates, not to speak of toys that year we first wintered at Rome."

"I think I do remember him. He was tall and dark, with pointed nose and pointed beard, an excellent ready-made Mephistopheles."

"Hush! that's not a very flattering description of such a man."

"Why such a man? Is he any different from his fellows?"

"In one way he is."

"And what is that one way?"

"Money."

"Ah! filthy lucre again," I ejaculated, with such venom that Mrs. Ellis regarded me fixedly.

"His wealth is fabulous."

"Indeed!" coldly.

"Yes. It can't concern you, though, more's the pity, as you are not free."

How she harped on that string, and how I longed to tell her, that I considered I owed no allegiance to the man who had deceived me so cruelly. Yet I dare not, for she was a rare gossip, and the news would have spread about the room like wild fire, had she known it, and I was in no mood for pitying or curious glances, from the people who crowded the spacious rooms, and who for the most part were utter strangers to me.

"You have been very good helping me to receive my guests," she went on, graciously, little knowing that I sheltered myself under the shadow of her wing to escape from my father and lover, "and now you must go and dance."

"Must—I—Is it absolutely necessary that I should?" I faltered.

"Of course, my dear. I wonder Lord Devedale has not carried you off, ere this. What do you think of him? Of course you are satisfied, he is so handsome."

"Of course," I assented, looking at him as he stood talking to Beattie Tremaine, and noticing, not without a slight pang, how pale and set his face was.

"What is the matter with your father? He

looks terribly cross; you had better go and ask him what is wrong."

"Oh, no!" I was beginning, when I heard a voice, saying—

"Mrs. Ellis, now you might redeem your promise and introduce me to your niece!"

"Certainly I will," she answered readily, performing the necessary introduction.

"May I have a dance, or am I too late?" asked Mr. Archdale, with a smile, and a glance straight down from his dark orbs into my up-raised eyes.

"You are not too late," I answered, dropping my lids, for something in that glance made me shiver. "I am not engaged for any dances."

"Then I am in luck," he cried. Give me this they are playing now, 'Sighs of the soul.' Is it not exquisite? And let me put my name down for two more."

Passively I handed him my programme, and then let him put his arm round my waist and whirl me the whole length of the long room.

When the waltz was over he led me to the conservatory, and reluctantly I entered it, for the memory of the scene so recently enacted there was too painful for me to care to be there, yet I had no good reason to give for objecting, and let him find a comfortable seat in a remote corner, shaded by a great overhanging palm.

"You don't remember me," he began, at once, pulling a chair close up to mine, and fixing his strange eyes on my face.

"I did not at first," I acknowledged, candidly. "When aunt spoke of Rome and the *palatines* I remembered—"

"The waltz, not me," he put in.

"Both," I declared.

"You would not have recalled the one save for the other?"

"Possibly," I returned, with a coolness that must have considerably astonished the millionaire, accustomed as he was to unlimited homage and attention from the fair ones of creation. "You see children are so fond of *bon-bons*," I added, not wishing to appear rude.

"Yes, I did not forget you."

"Really?"

"Really. I have often thought of you, and wondered if we should ever again."

"It is seldom a child makes such an impression."

"True. Still you were like someone I had known, and the likeness is more striking now. How old were you then?" he demanded, abruptly.

"Eight."

"And now?"

"I thought this question rather cool, still answered,—

"Eighteen."

"Ten years!" he murmured, staring at me absently. "Ten years, and so like—so like."

I did not feel easy under this fixed gaze, and asked if he lived in the neighbourhood!

"Yes. Archdale Hall is my place—five miles from here. I hope you will come and see it. It is a sort of show-place—one of the sights of the county."

"I shall be pleased to," I answered politely, feeling glad of anything that would be likely to interest me and divert my thoughts from the miserable break-down of my *affaires de cœur*.

"I will make up a party," he went on, with an eagerness that astonished me somewhat. "You must all come over. There is a ruined chapel, believed to have been part of a monastery; and a tower, from the top of which can be seen a view that well repays for the climb up the rugged steps, and the portrait gallery is no insignificant one."

My ancestors were many, and they all thought it necessary to have their features limned by skillful fingers. The portraits are not few and far between."

"I shall enjoy seeing them," I declared. "There is nothing more interesting than studying old family pictures."

"Do you think so?" he asked, with a laugh.

"I sometimes prefer studying flesh and blood—a living picture, when it is worth studying," and he accompanied the words with a look that pointed them, and brought a hot flush to my cheek and brow.

"I shall speak to Mrs. Ellis about it. Ah!" with a sigh, as the band struck up another waltz, "why do happy moments fly so quickly, and why must I go!"

"Because I suppose you are engaged to some one for this dance," I answered prosaically, for I thought his sighs, and manner generally, a little absurd.

"That is exactly it," he acknowledged. "I am going to waltz with a rosy, red-cheeked damsel, round whose stout waist I shall be hardly able to stretch my arm, and whose weight equals that of a young oak tree."

"A flattering description."

"Nevertheless true."

"Show me this human oak tree, and I will tell you if I think it true or not," I said rising, and moving towards the door.

"You are in a great hurry," he grumbled. "I suppose you will be glad to be rid of the society of an old fellow like me."

"You are not old."

"Am I not?" he laughed, and as we stepped out of the dim conservatory into the brilliant room involuntarily I raised my eyes for a good look at him.

"Well?" he queried, after a full moment.

"You are not so young as I thought you were," I announced, with disagreeable candour, for the light showed me a few grey hairs sprinkled amid the raven locks, and some lines about the mouth and eyes; "but you are not old."

"Almost old to a child like you," he said, dreamily, "for I am nearly forty;" and then with a bow he left me and sought his partner.

He had scarcely left my side when my father approached.

"Ruby," he said, with marked coldness, "there is one thing I must insist on."

"And that is?" I queried, fearfully.

"That you dance, at least once, with Lord Devedale."

"I cannot, I cannot," I cried quickly, clenching my hands till the nails wounded the soft flesh.

"You must," he rejoined, sternly, "if only for the sake of appearances. I don't know what your quarrel is, or what this mysterious acquaintance that you have made with him may be. Tomorrow he tells me all; still I insist that you dance once with him to-night."

"Oh, father, don't," I pleaded; "indeed I cannot."

"You must."

"If I must, then," I said, desperately, "make him promise not to open his lips to me, not to say one word while the dance lasts; this is the only condition under which I will consent to your command."

"So be it. I will tell him your wish," and my father went over and said something to Dick, after which he came slowly, yet not reluctantly towards me, silently offered his arm, which I as silently accepted; and without uttering one word we whirled in and out, in and out, amid the couples whirling round, never stopping till the music ceased; when, after a few strolls round the ball-room, he led me up to aunt, and with a stiff bow walked away.

CHAPTER VI.

I WAS glad when the dance was over. It was terribly painful to me to feel Dick's arm around me, not with the old tender pressure, but barely touching my waist, as though I was some stranger to whom he had just been introduced, and then the sunny eyes that were wont to meet mine with such a loving look never turned on me, only stared steadily straight ahead, as he guided me through the many intricacies of the waltz.

Of course this change was due to my own conduct; yet how, I asked myself angrily, could a woman with an atom of spirit have acted otherwise!

He had been cruel, heartless, unbelieving—had inflicted many hours of suffering on me, had deceived me, had doubted me, and pride rose strongly within my bosom, and made me hold

my head erect, and take the homage offered me by many of the gentlemen in the room, as if I were a duchess, and quite accustomed to adulation and flattery.

I flirted desperately with a young hussar, all moustache and drawl; a middle-aged attaché, be-rufed and dyed, and got up to any extent; a sporting parson, who was a particular friend of aunt's; and when Mr. Archdale came to claim his second dance I welcomed him so warmly and in such a marked manner that my other admirers fell back and left the field clear for him, an advantage of which he was not slow to avail himself.

He took me in to supper, secured a little table in a corner, which we had all to ourselves, and attended to my lightest wants with the most lover-like assiduity, and put his dark, sleek head much closer to mine, as he whispered soft nothings, than was absolutely necessary.

I found his small talk amusing, and it diverted me from my sad thoughts, so I listened with an air of deep attention as he chatted of the London theatres, the opera, the balls at Willis's, the concerts at St. James's, and spoke in glowing terms of Paris, Italy, Naples, Monaco; compared the gowns of English women with those of French and Austrian; asked my opinion of the last professional beauty; hoped he would never see my *cavalcade* in the shop-windows; praised the fashions; touched on the latest art mania; and, finally, playing with my fan, tore it in fashionable *nonchalance*, and, I suspect, purposely; and laughed to show his fine teeth, and declared I should have the best one that Paris could produce in less than a week.

"It does not matter in the least," I expostulated, looking at the ruin of what had been a pretty but inexpensive toy, composed of flaky white feathers.

"It does, indeed," he rejoined, quickly. "I was fearfully clumsy, but I will make amends. I will send to Paris instantly. You like white, don't you?" interrogatively. "It goes with this!" touching my tulle dress.

"Yes," I assented.

"Then it shall be white satin and pearls."

"No, no; indeed I could not accept anything so costly."

"You must, really."

"I could not."

"To please me. Promise you will accept it?"

His deep, constraining eyes were on me, I felt powerless to refuse, and I murmured,—

"Yes."

Looking up at the same moment I found Dick was regarding us with little pleasure. The instant he saw I noticed him he turned away, and, bending over the lady at his side, began to pay her great attentions.

I don't know why, but I felt unreasonably angry as I saw his moustachied lips close to her shall-like ear.

She was a pretty blonde, a Miss Travers, a near neighbour, so I concluded that they had met before, and were old friends.

It was no affair of mine now, of course. I told myself all was over between us, and yet—and yet—a sharp pang shot through my heart as she lifted her violet eyes, and looked up softly into the blue ones gazing down at her as they had often gazed at me.

I was flirting myself. That was a different matter, though. I was the injured, aggrieved person, while he was the injurer.

What right had he there, not six feet away from me, to parade his open admiration of another woman?

It made me feel wild, mad, reckless; and, with a loud laugh that attracted everyone's attention, I took Mr. Archdale's arm, and left the supper-room, returning to the dim seclusion of the conservatory.

I must have been out of my mind that night, else I would never have encouraged a man for whom I did not care two straws, nor have said the equivocal things I did, which might be interpreted two ways—to mean nothing, or to mean a great deal; and my companion, I fear, interpreted them in the latter way, and thought I was ready to fall in love with him.

Ah, me! If I could have lifted the veil, and taken a peep into futurity, how differently—how very differently—I should have acted, and what misery I might have spared myself and others!

But the future was a blank to me, and I went blindly on, caring for nought, save the moment's chatter, which kept me from thinking of my wrecked hopes, the downfall of all my castle-building, all my happy dreams!

"So you are going to make a fool of yourself and snub Lord Deeverdale, Walter tells me," observed my aunt, the next morning at breakfast as she fed Fido with dainty bits from the breast of a chicken, the greater part of which the over-fed monster deposited on the Turkey carpet.

"I don't know about making a fool of myself," I began.

"Then I do," she interrupted. "Worse than a fool. What prospects have you?"

"None," I answered, sullenly.

"That's true. Your father only just makes enough to support you and himself; and as for me, you know almost all I possess must go to my late husband's nephew."

"I know that."

"At the outside, all I shall have to leave you will be a few dresses (I shuddered at this as I thought of the apple-green silk), some jewellery, and fifty pounds a year."

"I don't want anything, aunt."

"Pooh. How are you to live—on love or air?"

"Neither. They are too unsubstantial. I can work."

"At what, pray?"

"As a governess or companion."

"Indeed! You think you are fitted for teaching?"

"I have had a good education."

"True. Still for all your accomplishments you would receive fifteen or twenty pounds a year and a shilling a-week laundry money, while as to being a companion you're much too good-looking for that post. The unmarried women would be too jealous to engage you, and the married ones, if they were wise, would not do so, as their husbands might prefer making love to you instead of to their lawful spouses."

"Aunt!" I ejaculated in horror.

"It's a fact. You're uncommon beauty, and you're improving every day, and you'll make sad havoc amongst male hearts, and female hearts also for the matter of that, for in the latter you will raise up sentiments of envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness. Your best plan is to go in for a rich husband. If you won't have Deeverdale, why then take Allan Archdale?"

"Aunt!" I exclaimed again.

"He's quite as rich," she continued, coolly, not noticing my interruption; "only he hasn't a title. You won't mind that?"

"I don't suppose I shall, as it will not concern me," I returned, coldly.

"Stuff! It will concern you if you choose that it shall. Play your cards well and you can be mistress of the Hall."

"I have no cards to play, and if I had I shouldn't play them. I don't want to marry. Marriage is a mistake. A woman gives up her freedom, her individuality, her will, her comfort to a man, and in nine cases out of ten the man fails to appreciate the sacrifice and orier, like the horse-leech, more—more—more."

"Dear me. You seem to know a lot about it," and Mrs. Ellis adjusted her spectacles, and looked at me through them as though I was a strange and curious animal.

"I do," I sighed, thinking of Dick.

"Really. His lordship has taught you, I suppose?"

"Yes," with another sigh.

"Well, take my advice—be sensible and make up your difference, whatever it be, with him."

"I can't do that. He has acted too badly."

"That is what your father thinks you have done."

"Papa is not just, then," I cried, hotly; "he does not know the rights of the case."

"He will soon, for there comes your fiancé that was to have been, and he will tell the whole story."

"His version of it, and I hope it will be the true one."

"I hope so," returned aunt, sententiously, "and that all will come right. He is a handsome fellow."

I lifted my drooping head as she spoke, and looked at the figure coming up the avenue.

The sun shone full on his face, and showed how white it was, and how heavy the eyes. He walked with a slow, lagging step, very different to his usual springy stride, and a great air of dejection was visible in every movement.

Angry. I was I found myself wishing that he would come and beg humbly to be taken back into favour in such a way that my pride would be appeased and my injured dignity calmed and soothed.

Yet I knew he was not the sort of man to do this. That he would never sue humbly for any woman's favour, and that if I did not make the first overtures towards reconciliation we should remain strangers for ever—that the wall which was growing up between us would, ere long, be so high that neither of us would be able to look over it, or touch the other's heart.

I wondered if he would seek an interview; try and see me after he had left papa; and, half-hoping he would, I seated myself by the window.

But an hour or two later I saw him going down the avenue, and he never even turned his head once, which added greatly to my wrath and indignation, and made me feel harder and more bitter against him.

So when father came into the room to discuss the matter I was in a very haughty and unyielding state of mind.

"Well, Ruby," he began, "Basil"—he always called him that—"has been telling me everything, and I think—"

"That he has behaved very badly," I interrupted.

"I think it is a pity that he acted as he did, and also that you have taken it in such a manner."

"Is that all? I am of opinion that his conduct was infamous!"

"Rather a strong term."

"Not too strong, considering all things."

"His was a romantic idea."

"And a very cruel one."

"He did not mean to be so. He wanted you to learn to love him for himself, and not to marry him just because you thought you ought to do so."

"Indeed!" sarcastically.

"And from what he tells me you do love him."

This was adding insult to injury, and I cried furiously,—

"Put it in the past tense, father, and say, 'did'!"

"Very well—did, then. Ooily, if your love has evaporated so quickly, I am inclined to think it was not the real thing; true and steadfast affection does not wither, like Jonah's gourd, in a single day, but stands many more rude shocks than that which yours has received."

"You forget his former conduct, I suppose!" I said, coldly, passing over this remark.

"What conduct?"

"His extreme reluctance to come to England to fulfil the engagement made for him, his ridiculous excuses and evident horror of my unfortunate self."

"Pooh! You exaggerate matters."

"Not at all. He was a laggard in love, and showed it only too plainly. He did not care for me."

"Perhaps not, as he had never seen you. But if he were reluctant then he is not so now. He loves you truly and devotedly, and you should think nothing of what he did before he saw you, for, if I remember rightly, you were not at all eager for a union with him."

This was true, and I hung my head, while a conscious blush spread over cheek and brow.

"Try and forget what has passed, child. Let your heart, and not your pride, rule you, and you will be happy."

"I cannot!—I cannot!" I cried, with an imperious gesture of dissent.

"Very well, so be it," said Dad, with visible annoyance. "With the usual obtuseness of your sex you are going to make a mess of your own future and of that of another. It is useless to appeal to a woman's common sense when her vanity is wounded, therefore I shall leave you to your own devices," and he did.

From that day he never alluded, even in the most distant manner, to Lord Deeverdale, or anything connected with him, and I was left to the guidance of my own sweet will.

Somehow or other I was not quite satisfied with this arrangement of affairs. Time hung heavily on my hands.

Aunt's house was a charming one, old gables, and mullioned windows and latticed panes, wreathed in the ivy of centuries' growth, and surrounded by a pretty garden, and beyond two or three acres of parklike ground; still, after I had examined all its queer nooks and corners, and strolled about the quaint, old-world garden, and visited the woods beyond there seemed nothing more to be done, a sudden stagnation fell on my life.

I missed the excitement of the stolen interviews with my quondam lover, the rows on old Father Thames' broad bosom, the delightful walks in Richmond Park, and, above all, the tender adieu that had passed between us.

I became dull and listless, and hardly listened to Basil's artless chatter, which would, under any other circumstances, have enlivened and amused me.

Altogether I was in such a gloomy and dejected frame of mind that at the end of a week, when Mr. Archdale called, I welcomed him warmly, and in such a fashion that it gave him evident pleasure, which he was at no pains whatever to conceal.

"I have brought the fan," he said, after awhile, drawing a box from his pocket. "I hope you will like it," and he unfurled a costly toy of white satin embroidered with fine pearls.

"How lovely!" I cried, taking it to my hand.

"It is very, very kind of you to give it to me."

"No, it is kind of you to take it," he whispered. "Does it really please you?"

"Indeed, it does!"

"Then I am glad—glad that I can please you."

I looked up at these words, and something in the ring of his tones and the light in his eyes startled me.

Those dark orbs held mine for fully a moment, and when I could turn them away a queer sensation crept over me.

I felt as though I had just awoke from a bad dream—a nightmare—and as if the horror and fear of it was still on me. I shook this feeling off after awhile, and went on talking gaily enough, listening to his plans for a party at his place to view the old antiquities and the family portraits.

"Will Wednesday suit you, Mrs. Ellis?" he asked.

"Very well," she assented, graciously.

"Then we will fix on that day. I shall expect you to lunch at two; that will leave us plenty of time to do the sight-seeing afterwards."

"Yes," she assented again, "that will suit us admirably."

So the matter was settled, and the next Wednesday we set off in aunt's comfortable barouche, and, after a pleasant drive, reached Archdale Hall.

It was a fine, substantial, Cromwellian building of gray stone, with splendid grounds surrounding it, in which herded the graceful deer, and where through the bracken ran the timid hare and rabbit.

On the lawn before the house was a group of ladies and gentlemen, and the first head my eyes lighted on was Dick's curly, golden one, and standing beside him was Miss Travers, looking lovelier than ever in a pale blue gown, and barbaric silver ornaments.

The sight of them standing there together, a little apart from the others, gave me a shock.

Dick was consoling himself quietly and quickly

and with a charming girl. Why shouldn't I do like wise?

There seemed to me to be no reason why I shouldn't, so I smiled sweetly into Allan Archdale's dark eyes as he helped me to alight from the carriage, and let him hold my hand in his without making the least effort to withdraw it, while he whispered,—

"Welcome to my home."

Lord Devedale, in duty bound, came forward with the others to greet us, but our hands hardly met, and no word passed between us, though dad and aunt both chatted with him. At lunch he devoted himself to Miss Travers, whilst our host was equally attentive to me; and when we strolled into the grounds the same order of things prevailed. We investigated the tiny, partially ruined chapel, built in a hollow, with its stone coffins projecting on either side of the altar, its queer figures carved on the walls, its statue of a gigantic crusader, in helm and shirt of mail; its foliated window and time-worn font; and then we passed out through the old lych-gate, with its queer-pointed porch, and wended our way to the tower.

Here most of the middle-aged folk gave in, and sat in the paved courtyard, and some of the young ones too, and in the end only Beattie and the sporting parson, Lord Devedale and Miss Travers, Mr. Archdale and myself had courage to mount the rough steps to see the view. In going up I stumbled, and would have fallen, only that our host was too quick, and caught me in his arms. For a moment he held me there, and when, covered with blushes and confusion, I released myself, I saw that Dick, who was going on before, had turned and witnessed the whole proceeding, and it gave me a wild feeling of delight to see him savagely gnaw his under lip as Mr. Archdale's arms encircled me.

"It's worth the scramble, isn't it?" asked the latter, as we emerged from a narrow door, and stood on a terrace railed in that ran round the tower.

(Continued on page 571.)

DIANA'S DIAMONDS.

—10:—

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT four miles from our home, as the crow flies, and eight by the grand trunk road that passes within a short distance of the sandy cart-track leading to our bungalow, there stands an old palace, in an immense garden, surrounded by a high stone wall, and an equally high hedge of prickly pears.

It was a favourite ride of mine, to canter over to the gardens, give my horse to a native groom, and then to saunter about the empty palace, or along the shady walks, till sundown warned me that it was time to turn homewards.

The palace had a story, and a bad name. It was said to be haunted by a white woman, taken prisoner at the time of the Mutiny, who had killed her captor, and then put an end to herself.

It was a curious old place, deserted now all but the gardens, which, thanks to their fertility, were kept up by the Rajah who owned them; that is to say, he let the ground to a fruit merchant, and once or twice in the season came with a large suite of friends and retainers, and feasted among the remains of former greatness.

The gardeners knew me well. I was one of their best customers for mangoes and a peculiar kind of orange for which this garden was famous.

A heavy stone gateway led into it; it was divided into long walks, bordered with bananas, orange trees, date palms, and flowering shrubs; there were but few cultivated flowers, but ferns and lilies and sweet jessamine grew almost wild. Here and there were white stone reservoirs for holding water, here and there a pond of gold-fish, a disused fountain, or a summer kiosk. In the centre and the densest part of the garden stood the palace, a grey building surrounded by deep verandahs, of stone fretwork and light pillar

three stories high. It was open on all sides to the winds of Heaven.

On each story was a wide room, with small rooms surrounding it, and not a door among them.

The special evening I am now going to describe is one that in looking back upon the story of my long life I can fix on as the precise moment at which my fate underwent a radical change—a change that was destined to affect the whole of my future career.

I had had a long gallop, and leaving "Rustum" under a tree in charge of his groom I entered, and sauntered towards the palace, ascended to the first story, and, seating myself on a stone seat, removed my hat, tossed back my golden locks, that had become somewhat loose in my recent gallop; and, leaning my elbows on the parapet, surveyed the scene beneath me.

The scarlet gold mohur, and fragrant frangipanni were conspicuous among all the other trees; and the flocks of green parrots, blue jays, and golden orioles flew and flashed from one clump or thicket to another.

There was no one in the garden but myself; the gardeners had gone home. It seemed a pity that such a lovely sight as lay before me was to be admired by one pair of eyes alone.

As I sat thus surveying the scene, with my head on my breast, I suddenly heard a voice—a man's voice—say,—

"Look! It is the enchanted princess of the fairy tale! It is golden locks herself!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" said another voice.

I started to my feet and looked up into the sky, in the verandah, above me, I heard footsteps, but I could see nothing. I felt very frightened; my heart bounded wildly, and my knees literally knocked together. I clutched the parapet for support, as I heard steps ascending the stairs and approaching me through the now rather dim centre room. In another moment three men came out into the full light, and stood within two yards of me on the stone verandah. The first was—or was my imagination to be blamed?—the hero of my dream; the second was short, square, with grizzled hair; the third was very young, and tall, and fair, with a large hooked nose, and bright faithless-looking blue eyes.

They were all in shooting dress; karki coats, belts, and leather gaiters, and all carried guns.

"I am afraid we have alarmed you," said number one, doffing his large, soft grey hat. "We have lost our way; and we came in here to see if we could find any one to put us in the right direction. We must apologise for the intrusion!"

He had a charming voice, but I had totally lost mine. Strive as I would, I could not speak. I literally could only lean against the stone ledge and stare.

"Perhaps she does not understand English!" said the elderly man, to my great indignation.

"Try her in Hindustani—or French!"

"Yes; I do speak English!" I burst out, in haste to contradict him; "but I was so surprised that I could not articulate!"

"An accident that does not often befall your sex, madam;" he answered, taking off his hat as he spoke, and revealing a bald head. "Can you kindly assist us to find the way to our camp? We are strangers in the land."

"In what direction is it?" I asked. I could talk easily enough to him; meanwhile I was conscious that the eyes of the two young men were riveted upon me.

"Near a village on the banks of a river—village called Paldi—about half a mile below that. Do you know where it is?"

"I know it well; I am going to within a short distance of it myself, and will show you the way, if you like!"

"Thanks, a thousand times. I hope we shall not be giving you any trouble. We are a shooting-party from Gurrumpore, and have been out six weeks. I—if I may present myself—am Mr. Hinkson, a—traveller. This is my nephew, Jack Hare," indicating the hooked-nosed youth, "an officer in the Fusiliers quartered at Gurrumpore. This is Captain Halford, of the same regiment."

I nodded to him in acknowledgment, but took no clear notice of the introductions.

"Perhaps I should tell you my name?" I asked. "Should I?"

"Quite as you please! we shall be much honoured."

On second thoughts I felt shy. I could not possibly bring it out; so, picking up my hat and putting it on, said,—

"If you follow me I will show you a short way to Paldi, if you don't mind rough ground, and jumping a few dug nullahs."

"Oh, we don't mind," returned Jack Hare, "but—" and he looked rather anxiously at his uncle.

"Oh, I'm all right; I'm rested now. I'll walk you down any day, young man!" with which proud boast he followed me down the steps and into the garden.

"You are not walking, are you?" he inquired, glancing at my white habit.

"No, I never walk; my horse is here." And raising my voice I called "Laloo!" and instantly from behind a tree, where they had both been doing, Laloo appeared leading my beautiful grey Arab.

"By jove!" exclaimed the two young men, "what a beautiful horse!" as with his tale and neck arched he came curvetting towards me.

"The handsomest Arab I've ever seen!" said Captain Halford. After a pause. "And must have a rare turn of speed. Allow me to mount you!"

"No thank you," waving him off. "I can manage best myself," and in another second I was on his back. "Laloo, go home!" I said, imperiously; and looking down at my three companions I could not resist saying, "Now, perhaps, you would like to see how he can gallop!"

"Not now, for mercy sake, my dear young lady!" cried Mr. Hinkson. "Don't be so cruel as to leave us here like sheep in the wilderness!"

"No; I have promised, and I won't desert you. But how did you lose your way? Where are your people?"

"We were after sand-grouse, and then a black buck got up. We stalked, and stalked him till we lost him and our way, and our beaters and coolies, and everything," said Jack Hare, walking beside me. "My uncle was dead beat when we saw that old palace. And thankful we all were to have a drink of water and some fruit."

"Were you there long before you discovered me?"

"About an hour. And when we saw you we all thought we were in a fairy tale, you looked so awfully unexpected and jolly, with your white dress and yellow hair!"

Meanwhile Captain Halford, who I noticed carried the old gentleman's gun, walked behind and said nothing. All the conversation was left to Jack and his uncle.

"Had you good sport?" I inquired.

"No, wretched!" cried Mr. Hinkson. "I thought we should be knocking over a brace of tigers every day! Instead of that we have been out six weeks, and only got a spotted bear, a cow bison, a couple of buck and a porcupine!" he concluded, in a mournful tone.

"A wretched bag!" I answered. "Why, father got four tigers and two leopards this season!"

"Did he really! I suppose you are out from some of the northern stations! Where is your camp? Have you many guns?"

"Camp! guns! I don't understand you."

"I mean, are you not also out in camp, on a shooting trip? I know lots of ladies go nowadays."

"No, I'm not," I answered. "I live here always!"

"You what!" almost shouted Mr. Hinkson.

"I live—have lived—all my life about a mile this side of the village of Paldi."

"I say!" expostulated Mr. Hare, "you know you are chaffing!"

"Chaffing! what is chaffing? I never heard the word before. What does it mean?"

There was a dead silence.

I think my companions began to believe me, could feel that they were exchanging glances. At this moment we came to our first nullah—a

nullah is a deep crack in the ground, varying from three feet deep and three feet wide to a hundred deep and forty or fifty in width. This one was about twenty feet deep by fifteen. "Rustum" and I knew it well; it could not be taken at a walk, so quitting my companions, I broke into a gallop, rushed him at it, and landed like a deer on the other side. Then I turned and watched the others getting across. Captain Halford helped Mr. Hinkson to scramble down, with his funny little short-gaitered legs, and to scramble up; his nephew Jack took care of himself.

"Your horse jumped like a deer, and you rode him like a deer!" said Mr. Hare, as he joined me.

"I did not know that deer could ride!" I answered.

"Ha! ha! Jacky, my boy. Nipped your fine compliment in the bud, and quite right, too. My dear young lady, how splendidly you ride, if I may say so!"

"Oh, yes! you may. Of course I can ride; I've ridden ever since I was about three; it's second nature to me."

"I cannot, cannot get over your living here. You are not joking—now, are you?"

"No, I never joke."

"Have you any society?"

"Only the village of Paldi, if you call that society."

"Good heavens! but you have some European neighbours, have you not?" persisted Mr. Hinkson.

"Not one. Nay, to spare you the trouble of asking any rude questions, I may as well tell you at once that, except my father and two old servants, you and these gentlemen are the only Europeans I have ever seen."

This amazing announcement caused a dead and a profound silence to fall upon the whole party, a silence which lasted until we reached another and more intricate nullah than the last, and I could feel that my companions were looking at me furtively, as if I was some wonderful and unique natural curiosity!

After this we discoursed of the wet, the rainy and the cold weather, of the chances of a flood in the river by-and-by; and I ventured to ask Mr. Hinkson, who kept close beside me, a few questions touching Gurrumpore.

"Were there many ladies there?" I asked.

"About fifty."

"Were they pretty?"

"No, not particularly. Not in his style, at any rate."

"What did they do all day?"

"They danced and rode, and ate, and drank, and talked, and flirted; they all gossiped, and abused one another behind their backs."

"Then I am glad I don't live at Gurrumpore!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, there are worse places," put in Mr. Hare. "In the cold weather there are races, and polo, and tennis."

"Polo and tennis, what are they?"

"Have you never heard of them?" staring at me very hard. "They are both games played with a ball; at polo you ride a pony, at tennis you run and rush about; in fact it's capital exercise."

"Then I should prefer polo," I returned, emphatically.

"No doubt you would make an 'A' performer, only you see ladies don't usually play."

"Don't they? What a pity. If I got a chance I should like to learn."

This remark was made close to our own entrance, which consisted of two great gate piers—no gate—leading into a short avenue of big Peepul trees, that went straight across our compound, which in England would be called quite a small demesne being an expanse of about forty acres, enclosed by a prickly hedge, and dotted with trees.

The avenue led up to the back of our bungalow, which, as I have before said, faced the river. "Here I am at home," I exclaimed, and I was about to say that I would send a servant to guide them for the remainder of the way, but looking down on Mr. Hinkson's hot, dusty, tired, counte-

nance I had compassion on him, and I added, "Perhaps you would like to come in and rest!"

"Thanks!" taking off his hat and wiping his forehead. "I must say I think walking in this country is desperate hard work. Next time I go out from camp without a pony you may call me a Dutchman!"

"Then come in and rest awhile," I said. "Father will be home very shortly," and I led the way, followed by my three new acquaintances, who were all walking in line.

From the back of the verandah we were descried by Peggy. I could distinguish her hands uplifted with astonishment at the sight of my followers, who were our very first visitors.

I cantered on ahead, and thus found a moment's time to break the matter to her gently.

"Sakes alive! what's all this?" she cried as I came within earshot. "What do I see coming up after you?"

"Three gentlemen who have lost their way from their camp, near Paldi. I met them at the old palace, and have brought them so far."

"You need not tell me that—abuse, don't I see them?"

"And I've asked them to come in and rest."

"Well, ye could do no less. Ye could not leave them at the gate, maybe fainting with thirst and hunger, and never ask if they had a mouth in them. Of course, they bid to come up—I hope the mather won't go clean out of his mind."

With which agreeable aspiration, and muttering something about "verandah" and "refreshments" she bounced into the house, and was lost to sight.

A few moments later, when my followers were actually seated in the said verandah, contemplating the view, the stage horns and trophies, the garden, the long range of stables, and Arabs tethered under the trees, she re-appeared in a clean apron and her black silk (how she got into it in the time was simply a marvel).

She was now all smiles and courtesies, and was followed by two servants, bearing trays and glasses. This influx of visitors was nearly as great an event to her as it was to me, and nothing in their appearance escaped her sharp eyes.

Revived by a whisky and soda, Mr. Hinkson became more loquacious than ever.

He informed me that, having made his fortune (he did not say how) and retired, "he had now come away from England to see the world"—my own favourite expression. How odd it seemed to me that he should call coming out in the Jungle seeing the world! I called going to England "seeing the world."

Conversation soon became very pleasant and general. I did not talk much. I was only too pleased to listen to Mr. Hinkson explaining his experiences, whilst his companions threw in a remark or a joke now and then.

As I sat in a deep chair, with my hat in my lap, surrounded by the three strange gentlemen, and I must say enjoying the great novelty of my position, and no longer the least shy (why should I be shy in my own verandah!), Peggy hastily came over, and whispered excitedly into my ear,—

"Miss Rancee, honey, goodness protect ye! The mather is coming, riding up the avenue."

CHAPTER V.

FATHER'S face was certainly "a study" when he turned the corner of the verandah on his black Arab.

Very stern he looked, as his eyes took in the most unusual, unexpected scene! However, his instincts of hospitality were stronger than his surprise. And when Mr. Hinkson half rose, and called out in a cheery voice,—

"Quite taken you by storm, you see!" his face relaxed, and he dismounted, and gave them each and all a cordial welcome.

Mr. Hinkson spared me all explanation. In two minutes he had related their own bad luck, their good fortune in coming across me, and my kindness in acting as guide and hostess, &c.

Men, I discovered, soon assimilate when once they get upon the topic of "sport." In a quarter of an hour they were all busily discussing and comparing "bags" and experiences, as sociably as if they had known each other for months.

When I heard father say, "Of course you will stay and dine?" and they promptly agreed to do so, with many apologies for their costume, I rushed off to prepare Peggy for such a formidable addition to our table.

Peggy was not a whit dismayed; she had expected it, and was quite complacent over the menu.

"There's soup as usual, fish fresh from the river, mutton cutlets, stewed pigeons, roast peacock, curry and rice, sweets, pine-apples, plantains, and one of our own plum cakes, and cakings of the best claret and champagne. What more would they have?"

"Yes, I suppose it will do, with plenty of flowers and lights on the table, and the silver branch candlesticks," I said, somewhat doubtfully.

"Do, of course it will do; but I'll tell you what won't do—that's yourself—the only lady in the place, and you must be dressed up."

"Dressed up! and in what? I have nothing but my white cottons, as you know very well."

"No, unless your good dark blue cloth habit, and you could not well wear that, I suppose?"

"Not exactly," I returned, with deep scorn.

"And those two young gentlemen have set off to the camp, after all, to dress themselves up, but the old man is just going to wash his hands in the mather's room; he and the mather are great already over the shooting. Well, now what can we do to smarten you up! First and foremost take down your hair."

After everything was said and done I did not look a bit different to every day, my hair smoothly coiled, a clean, high, white nansook dress, and my rather shabby leather belt.

I looked at my reflection with a very discontented face, and at last a happy thought struck me, and, suddenly turning to Peggy, I seized both her hands in mine, and said,—

"I have it, Peg! The diamonds!"

"That's true! There's the necklace, but I'm thinking that would be going too far—in the other way—too much dress."

"But what good are they if they are never to be seen and worn? When shall I ever have such another chance of showing them off? They may lie another fifteen years, and not a soul cross the threshold, and now is my chance."

"That's true enough," she once more assented. "I suppose you may as well give them a turn when you can."

And in a few moments she was putting my only piece of dress round my neck, and very magnificent I looked.

How the stones flashed and shone! They seemed almost too bright, too dazzling.

At first my impulse was to take them off. But as I gazed I had not it in my heart to remove them, and I figured about before the glass twisting and turning my neck about to catch their sparkling reflection from every point of view.

"The gentleman is back," said Peggy, entering after a long absence. "And it is there you are before the glass yet. Go away now and talk to them, and don't get your head turned."

Thus driven forth I entered the drawing-room, and found I was the last arrival, and that every eye was instantly fixed on me.

I thought I heard a slight exclamation of horrified astonishment escape from father, but it may have been imagination; and how Mr. Hinkson stared at me and my diamonds. Indeed, so did the two young men, who were now clad in neat tweed suits, and spotless linen, but they surveyed me in a less obtrusive fashion whilst he gaped open-mouthed.

"Dinner ready on the table," shouted our big native pulls, and Mr. Hinkson rose and advanced towards me, and held out his arm.

"May I take you in to dinner?" he said.

"No, thanks," I replied; "I can walk alone quite well. Did you think I was lame?" I inquired, merrily.

"There, lead the way, Rancee," said my

father, rather sharply, and I could tell by the tone of his voice that I had made some terrible mistake.

Dinner was a success. I had sufficient intelligence to grasp that agreeable fact.

We had a capital cook, and he had done his best.

The soup and fish were excellent, and Mr. Hinkson was called for another help of "Turkey," and was rather startled to hear that he had been eating peacock.

As champagne circulated conversation became brisk.

Mr. Hinkson made eager inquiries about the possible chance of getting a tiger within a reasonable distance, and talked most valiantly of the slaughter of wild beasts.

Father discoursed of the hundred tigers he had shot in his time, and of the probability of finding a couple about ten miles off about the banks of the river.

Mr. Hare listened to them, and looked at me. Captain Halford not only looked at me, but addressed to me his whole conversation.

"Did I not find the jungle lonely, and the days long?"

"Not when father is at home."

"And when he is at home how do you put in your time?"

"In the morning we ride, in the daytime I read, in the evening I ride again, or go out in the boat or garden; I find plenty to do."

"And you don't miss society?"

"I do not miss what I have never known."

"Have you all the new books? Do you see the latest novels? What do you read?"

"We do get new books two or three times a year. I have never read a novel, unless you call 'Robinson Crusoe' and the 'Vicar of Wakefield' novels. I read history and essays, and now and then I do a little Latin or mathematics, not to forget what I have learnt."

"Then you have had quite a boy's education!"

"Quite."

"And never read a love tale in your life! Indeed, perhaps the very name of love and lovers is now mentioned in your ears for the first time!"

I blushed. I could not say why, and then looking him full in the face, I asked, boldly,—

"Is there anything very remarkable about me that you smile in such a way? Am I different to other girls?"

"Yes, there is one very remarkable thing about you," he answered, still smiling.

"Oh, I know; my complete ignorance."

"No; I should think you were unusually well educated."

"Then—my diamonds?"

"No; extraordinary as they are, it is not your marvellous diamonds."

"Then do tell me what it is, please—please, do."

"I will another time, not now. May I ask if that necklace is a heirloom?"

"No, it was given to father by a native prince. He gave it in return for some favour, but he was glad to get rid of it. He said it was unlucky, and the centre stone (touching it) is called the Evil Eye."

"I am sure its ill-luck must vanish now that it is in your possession," said Captain Halford, politely.

"I hope so, at any rate! This is the first time I have even worn it."

"I hope it may bring you nothing but good fortune; and I," taking up his glass, "drink to the diamond necklace and its owner. May their future be bright and gay, and may they never be parted!"

"Thank you; but as to our future being gay you are pleased to be sarcastic at our expense."

"You don't mean to tell me that you are to be buried alive in the jungle all your life?" he exclaimed, rather sharply.

"I don't know what you call buried alive. I suppose, indeed I know, that I shall always live, and no doubt die here."

"Impossible! Your father would never be so selfish!"

"Hush! Father is not selfish; you must not

say such things. He is the best father in the whole world."

"And are you content?" looking at me narrowly.

"Not always," I confessed; "not when I am alone here for weeks at a time, with Peggy. Then I often feel—oh! I'm ashamed to say how I feel—such a vehement impatience at my life here, such a strong wish for wings to get away from this river bank, such a thirst to know other surroundings, to learn what other people's life is like, in short," lowering my voice in case father should hear me; "to see the world."

"I don't wonder! It would be odd if you did not."

"But please don't think I am often in such a frame of mind. It is only when father is away, and the days are empty, and Peggy is cross."

"Have you never had any companion but Peggy?"

"Never. I do not remember my mother. She died before we came here, when I was quite a baby. Now I have told you all about myself, it is your turn to tell me what you do, and how you spend your time, and I am sure your proceedings are ten times more interesting than mine."

"When I am at Gurrumpore I spend a lot of my time on duty, I play tennis, or ride of an afternoon."

"By yourself?"

"Oh, no!—generally with some of the other fellows, sometimes with ladies. Then we have mess at eight o'clock, a game of billiards, unless we dine out, or go to a dance; and that's all. Not much in that!"

"Are there any pretty young ladies?"

"Yes; one or two."

"What are they like, and what are their names?"

"Miss Monk is small and dark, with very bright eyes and good teeth; she rides well, too. Miss Julian is fair and tall; she does not do much besides talking and dancing."

"What a lazy girl! And are you married?"

"I? Oh, dear no! And he laughed.

"Or the other gentlemen?"

"No."

"What, not even Mr. Hinkson! Surely he is married!"

"Not even Mr. Hinkson; but I believe he is looking for a wife."

"Really! But he is too old and—"

"Ugly, you were going to say, were you not?"

"Never mind. I say I don't think he will find a wife."

"Oh, won't he! Shows how little you know about it; he could get a dozen to-morrow. He is immensely rich, and that's the main thing. Money is a fine bait!"

"And Mr. Hare?" I continued, still curious.

"Is as poor as Job, and I am little better."

"Are you really poor? You don't look it," I said, frankly.

"Well, I am not exactly a beggarman, going about in rags, which is perhaps your idea of poverty; but to live on my pay and my small allowance and to keep out of debt is rather a tight fit, I can tell you."

"I think papa is rich," I said, looking at my parent meditatively.

"I should not wonder if he was," argued my listener, with a significant glance at me and my diamonds.

"Well, Rance, we are going to smoke," said father, "and you might like to go into the drawing-room."

"No thank you, father; I would much rather stay here, and you know I am accustomed to your cigars after dinner, and rather like them than otherwise."

"Nevertheless, my dear, we will dispense with your company for the present."

Thus sternly dismissed, and covered with blushes, I rose and left the apartment.

I was speedily followed by the two young men, who deserted the elders and the discussion of sport for me.

They came into the verandah where I was standing; and Captain Halford, seeing my guitar

on the table, picked it up and struck a few chords.

"I see you play, Miss Rance! Excuse me, I don't know your other name."

"My name is really Diana Manners; Rance is only a pet name. I play the guitar very little indeed; but I daresay you play it well."

"Yes, and sings like a bird," broke in Mr. Hare. "Now, Halford, strike up something lively; we will go over and sit in those chairs they have put overlooking the river. The moon, the river, a guitar, and ladies' eyes go capitally together. Come along and give us one of your Spanish ballads," he reiterated, leading the way as he spoke.

Captain Halford needed but little pressing.

He followed us obediently over to the seats in question; slung the guitar ribbon over his head, and, after a very short hesitation, struck up the air of a delightful song—as far as his voice and the air went; but what it was all about I could not say; the tune, a kind of haunting, pathetic air, was ample engagement for me.

Another, an English song, followed, and the music brought out father and Mr. Hinkson, who now joined the circle, and we all sat down in a semi-circle on the edge of the river-bank.

"Mr. Hinkson tells me you have a fortnight here yet," said father, addressing the two young men. "If you would stay here a week, that would leave you a week to get back, and I think I could show you some sport in the shape of a tiger or two. You might pitch your tents in this compound, and live here altogether. I shall be very glad of your company."

"And so shall I," I added, with most unnecessary frankness, and unusual *impudence*.

I saw a smile creeping round Captain Halford's moustache, as he accepted father's invitation with undoubted pleasure. As for Mr. Hare, he actually rubbed his hands and jumped about like a schoolboy, so great was his delight.

"You see," said father, "you strangers don't know the country—I do. I have lived here for so many years that I am looked upon as a kind of lord of the soil, and all the tigers and big game within fifty miles are preserved solely for me. Saharis would take your money and tell you lots of lies, but they would not dare to boast for one of my tigers. I know of a pair, tiger and tigress, about ten miles off, that I had meant to have left till later on."

"Good gracious!" shrieked Mr. Hinkson, bounding out of his chair. "What's that? A tiger here!"

"It's only my tame panther," I returned, calmly. "It is as quiet as a dog; she follows me everywhere. I have had her ever since she was a kind of kitten. You need not be the least afraid of her."

"A queer kitten. I don't like the look of her at all; send the brute off," he cried, excitedly, as puppy, as we called her, began to rub herself against his chair, and then against father's.

"I'll take her away if you like, but she is as tame as any cat. Would you," turning to the two young men, "like to go down the river in the boat, and we will take the panther! She is very fond of going for a row, and she loves music."

To this they agreed without the least hesitation, and soon we three young people were gliding down the Karrau.

Mr. Hare rowed, Captain Halford played the guitar, and I sat in the stern, my diamonds flashing in the moonlight, and the panther lying at my feet.

The boat, with music on the river, came into my head as we floated along. Perhaps there was something in dreams after all.

CHAPTER VI.

THE day after our little boating-party father got up some pig sticking, so-called. It really consists of riding after the wild boar with spears. Disturbed from his lair, among rushes, he darts forth at a tremendous gallop. It takes a good Arab to keep near him. He doubles, and darts, and turns, and twists, and when at bay or

wounded, frequently dashes fiercely at the horse, and rips up his fore legs with his sharp tusks.

Mr. Hinkson and I played the part of spectators on this occasion. He had the assurance to say that "he was looking after me!" as he jogged along on his stout little pony.

Poor though Captain Halford declared himself to be, he owned a splendid Australian horse, and got the first spear. He rode well, and I considered myself no mean judge; he rode as well as father, who was an excellent horseman.

Mr. Jack Hare's performance was so-so, and he was mounted on a galloway that was remarkable for nothing but long legs and a long tail.

After sport there was luncheon, a picnic, a ride home, dinner, songs, chess for the elders, and a row on the river for the young people.

"Now mind, Miss Baines," said Peggy, as she brushed my hair that night, "that you are not to be falling in love with either of these young men. Whatever you do don't do that."

"What an idea, Peg; the last thing I should think of!"

"May be, then, it's not the last thing one of them would think of! One of them might fall— But what, I am only talking nonsense. Sure they see dozens of beautiful girls every hour of the day elsewhere."

"So they do. And now which of them do you like the best, Peggy?"

"The young one, I think. The captain is the handsomer man, and his singing bates all. It would coax the fish out of the water, but the young one has a lovely smile! It's beautiful!"

"More than you can say for his nose!" I cried. "It's exactly the shape of a parrot's."

"Well, a man is none the worse for having a fine handle to his face, and he is the old fellow's heir, and will have heaps of money."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, them native servants does be terrible gossips. They say the Captain is poor, but a very good gentleman, and that the ladies does be very fond of him."

"How do you mean?"

"Writing notes, and asking him to dine, and ride, and come to tea; that's just for his looks. But he can't marry any of them, for he has not got a rap, unless he got a girl with money."

I looked at myself in the glass and blushed. I was a "girl with money"; and Peggy, who was brushing my hair, noticed blush and look in the mirror.

Our eyes met, but we said nothing; under many circumstances silence is golden. I was not in love with Hugh Halford, but it now occurred to me as a very blissful idea that he might fall in love with me! Why not?

One morning, by starlight, we set out riding, bound for a tiger-hunt. I accompanied the party as a matter of course. I had already seen the death of at least twenty tigers.

Winding in the dim light, in single file, we kept above the bed of the river, pushing our way through wet, dewy jungle, or among brakes of bamboo canes.

As the dawn flickered in the east, and the birds awoke, and the stars closed their eyes, our road became wider.

We could ride two abreast, and Captain Halford and I fell to the rear and tried the experiment—rather, I fancied, to Jack Hare's annoyance.

"I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed these few days of civilized jungle life," said my companion. "I am only sorry that we have but three days more; and then back to the realms of society and duty."

"When you will soon forget the queer, wild people you met in the wilderness!" I added.

"Never! I never shall forget. You are not a person that could easily slip from one's memory."

"I! And what shall you remember about me?—that my only claim to manners was my name?"

"I shall remember to my dying day, the first time I saw you, sitting on the balcony of that deserted old palace, gazing down into the garden, with your thoughtful face and golden hair; you looked, as Hare said, just like the princess in a fairy tale!"

"Which fairy tale?"

"The one I think with the hedge of thorns, where all the people slept for a hundred years, until a prince came and woke the princess with a kiss."

"And what happened then?"

"Oh! every one started up wide-awake, and the prince took the princess away and married her, and they lived happy ever after in the good old fashion."

"The case is not a parallel at all," I said. "You must think of another princess—for I was not asleep. No one kissed me, and there was no prince, only three sportsmen."

"Perhaps one of them was a prince in disguise," he returned, lowering his voice.

We were riding very close together along a narrow path, lined with date palms and underwood, and had lost sight of the others.

"Don't let us talk any more nonsense," I said, bluntly. "Is this the usual style of conversation in society? Is this the way you talk to other girls—girls at Gurrumpore?"

"No; but then, you see, you are not like other girls."

"No, I am a wilful girl of the jungle—ignorant and unsophisticated. You think you may say what you please to me, don't you?"

"No, Miss Manners, you know that that is very far from what I think. I think, I would to Heaven that other girls were more like you—natural, innocent, and true; unfettered by the divinities of that great Moloch, the world, and his lesser satellites, custom, artificial manners, false morals, false hearts, false faces, false smiles—"

"Why not say false teeth, false hair, and false complexion, when you are about it," said a loud bantering voice, and Mr. Jack Hare came cantering up behind us. "This is no time of day to be pitching into society; trot on, we are now within a quarter of a mile of the first tie up, and we have not a minute to lose."

I must here explain what is meant by a tie up before proceeding further. When a tiger is known to be in a certain district, and has carried off so many cattle, or so many people (especially the aged and infirm), someone bethinks them of letting some shooting party know.

The shooting party send their Shikari—hunter and gamekeeper rolled into one—who bags half-a-dozen head of cattle, and ties them up, singly, in the most likely places to tempt the tiger, who is pretty sure to kill, and eat one of them; and after this hearty meal he retires, gorged, to the depths of the jungle to sleep it off. When he is known to have dined, and to have "laid up," in some particular jungle, the word is passed on to the sportsmen, and the jungle is beat by about two hundred coolies, with shouts and yells, and crackers, and squibs; their object being to drive the tiger in a certain direction where the gentlemen are posted up in the trees, ready to pot old stripes as he bounds past—to shoot him on foot is madness, and is never attempted.

Arrangements like small platforms are fastened up in these trees, and called "maichans," are about eighteen feet from the ground, and hold two people.

Father, Mr. Hinkson, and Captain Halford squeezed into one on this occasion, as it was in the best position, and Jack Hare and I were relegated to the other lower and less conspicuous post; in fact, it was a hundred to one if we saw the tiger at all.

A weary wait of nearly two hours elapsed, then sounds of tom-toms, fireworks, at first faintly audible, now came nearer, nearer, nearer. At last a kind of crash was heard through the underwood; an orange and black object sprang out with a bound, and was instantly shot at, and slightly wounded by Mr. Hinkson, who held his rifle with trembling hands. However, a second shot, almost like a second barrel, came so swiftly from my father's express that the animal rolled over stone dead, with a bullet through his brain. Great excitement now ensued; this noble wild beast, when we all descended cautiously to examine him, measured ten feet six inches, from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail. He looked

like a great big cat stretched out upon the short scorched grass.

According to the etiquette of sport first shot claims the animal, no matter if the wound be but skin deep.

The tiger was therefore Mr. Hinkson's lawful spoil; and he was nearly delirious with pride and excitement.

"If there were only a few more to shoot, now I have my hand in!" he cried, vain-gloriously.

The words had scarcely left his lips when one of the native beaters dashed into our little circle and uttered two words—only two—but amply sufficient to scatter us in all directions. These two words were "The tigress!"

How I bounded back into my maichan I know not. This time Captain Halford was my companion. The others had taken to various trees, the nearest to hand, with the maddest haste—and no wonder.

Breathlessly we sat, for fully five minutes. I could distinctly hear the beating of my own heart, and I should not wonder if my partner heard it too, for the maichan was small; and necessity compelled us to sit very close together.

All at once I caught sight of her, as she came stealing through the underwood, just like a great wicked, tawny, cruel cat. She advanced into the open space, looked around her, lashed her tail.

Then she gave a roar that shook the very woods, and then she became aware of the dead body of her lord and master.

She approached it stealthily, smelt all around it in dead silence, and then her roars were appalling to hear—lamentation and frenzy combined. Next she began to sniff eagerly about, presumably for us!

Mr. Hinkson, who had sought refuge in a tree close to ours, dropped his rifle, so amazing was his terror.

This performance brought the surged animal nearly opposite to us.

Captain Halford drew a long breath, and was about to fire, when he was anticipated by Jack Hare, who wounded her in the shoulder.

The shot knocked her over; and she rolled upon the ground, tearing at the wound with her teeth.

Then she got up again and looked fiercely about her. Suddenly she caught sight of us; and with a countenance that was literally diabolical in expression, and a roar in keeping, she came straight at our tree and rather fragile maichan with a bound that could only be possible to a maddened wounded tigress.

She sprang; she reached our little platform with her fore claws.

Another effort, and she would be beside—between us. Our lives might be counted now by seconds.

I trembled like an aspen leaf, conscious of those great yellow claws, those yellow eyes, that hot breath within a yard of me.

Luckily, Captain Halford was cool; if he had dropped his rifle it would have been a bad business.

Leaning down promptly, though his face was rather white, he planted both barrels to her forehead, and fired that second. She fell back dead, carrying the maichan and us with her, in her fall.

There we lay for a moment a confused mass. At length, when we extricated ourselves, we discovered the tigress, of course, and Captain Halford with an injured knee, the maichan in pieces, myself scathless.

It had been an exciting ten minutes, but now it was all over. Two splendid tigers—one the prey of Mr. Hinkson, the other of Jack Hare, though they had killed neither—were a grand bag.

The beaters were assembled and paid, coolies appointed to carry home the sport—twelve to each animal—and with tom-tom beating proudly before us, we started homewards at the head of quite a triumphal procession.

Captain Halford made light of his hurt, and once more rode beside me. After discussing our recent adventure in all its bearings, he



"WE HAVE LOST OUR WAY AND CAME TO SEE IF YOU COULD PUT US RIGHT," SAID THE STRANGER.

"To think that to-morrow will be my very last day? Shall you be glad to be rid of us?"

"No—very sorry. Your visit has been a great event to us, greater than you would believe. When you go back to civilization, don't forget us altogether."

"Forget you!" he began, impetuously. "Miss Manners, you tempt me to say things that—I have no right to say to you."

What could he mean? Of course I could not possibly ask him, and we rode along in silence for nearly half a mile. At length I spoke again and said,—

"You remember saying that there was something strange about me, something remarkable, the first time you saw me? You promised to tell me what it was, and you have never done so yet."

"And you wish me to fulfil my promise now?"

"Yes, please; though I may seem the most inquisitive girl you ever met."

"Have you no idea what it is that would make you remarkable amongst hundreds, much less here in this unappreciative wilderness?"

"Not the faintest notion."

"And must I keep a rash promise, and tear the veil from your eyes, which are far better as they are?" looking full into them as he spoke.

"Yes, my curiosity is unbearable. I must and will know what is so remarkable about me."

"Your appearance—your face. In short, seeing that I was going to question him most anxiously, "in short—your beauty."

"Beauty! Am I beautiful, am I pretty?"

"Yes. Am I the first who ever told you so?"

"Of course you are; and I believe you are joking. Now, are you not?"

"On my honour I am not. When you turned round and looked at us that time in the old palace I got quite a start, for such a face as yours I had never seen in all my life, save in my dreams. Pretty girls there are in plenty, but you are something more than that."

"Am I? And what is the good of it to me here?"

"Not much. But beauty is a great gift—the greatest, or properly speaking, the most powerful that a woman can possess. Some day you will be glad of your beauty for somebody's sake!" And here he looked straight before him, rather grimly, and said, "We had better be jogging on. Don't let my bruises and cuts be an impediment to our pace; they are really nothing."

So saying, he started off at a sharp canter, and never once spoke to me till we were dismounting at home.

That evening we were all too exhausted for any exertion; the elders did not play chess, nor the juveniles boat.

We sat out above the river, in the moonlight, and Captain Halford was induced to sing several Spanish and English ballads, whilst we listened amongst all the appropriate surroundings, to such a voice.

The last song he sang I remember well—but too well. It had a strange, haunting air, and as he began it he looked straight at me, and then across the river, from which point of view he never again moved his eyes till the last line had died away on the warm-scented air.

The words, as well as I can recollect them, were these,—

"Have you forgot the garden where we met?
It all depends! You know it all depends!
We were alone midst roses dewy wet,
The best of friends—the dearest friends.
The sun had set too soon, her weary way
Down the dark lane a maiden wends;
Will she return there, when I wait some day?
It all depends! It all depends!"

"How soft the night! Can you recall the hour
It all depends! Hush! dear, it all depends!
Across your window in the ruined tower
A jasmine bends—so fondly bends!
Hark to her voice, dim, silence to despair
Deep music lends—so sweetly lends
When shall I see her face, her hand, her hair?
It all depends! It all depends!"

"How will it end? In sorrow or in pain?
It all depends, sweetheart! It all depends!
We may be parted, we may meet again,
It all depends! It all depends!
Life such as ours, may be so false or true,
So fondly false. It all depends!
Tell me once more! I can be true—can you
It all depends! It all depends!"

My heart beat very fast as I listened to this song, especially fast in the last verse.

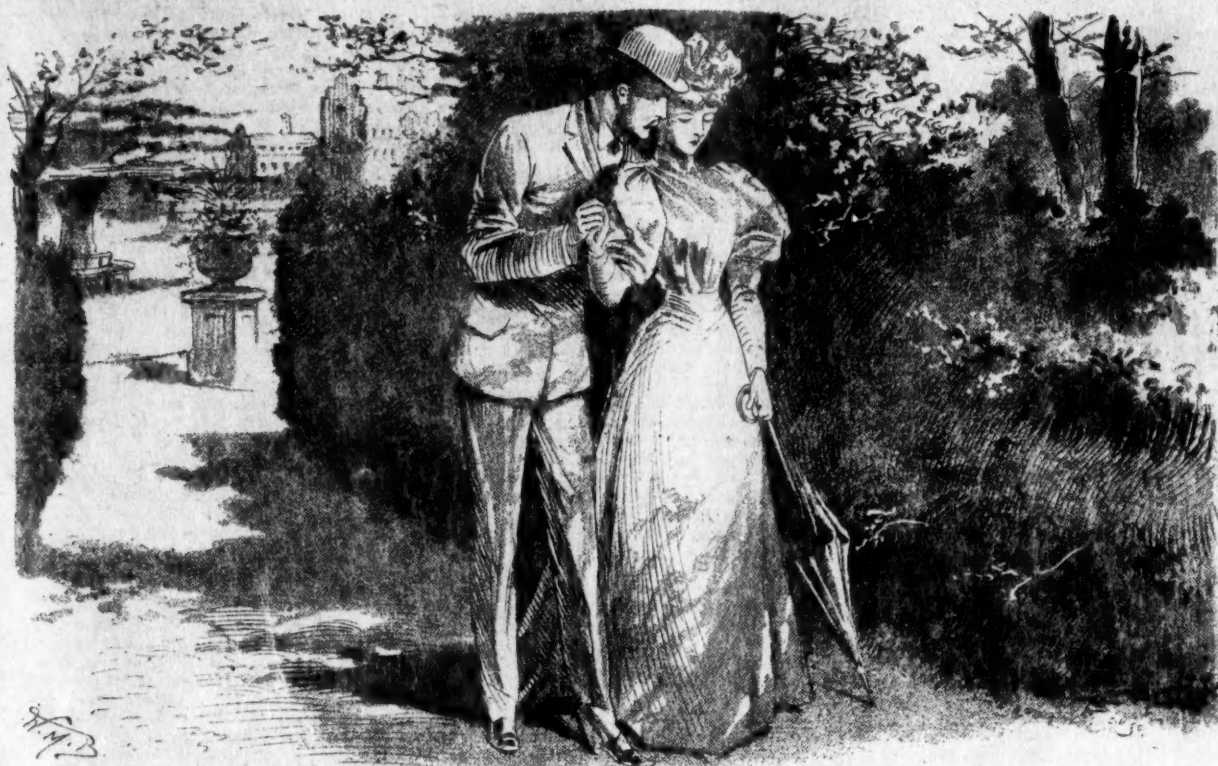
I had the egregious vanity to take some of the lines to myself, and my eyes could scarcely see for tears, so I kept them resolutely turned away from my companion's, and fixed upon the dim horizon for fully five minutes.

When I looked round once more Captain Halford's chair was only occupied by my guitar, and he was gone.

(To be continued.)

NEEDLES are all made by machinery. The piece of mechanism by which the needle is manufactured takes the rough steel wire, cuts it into proper lengths, files the point, flattens the head, pierces the eye, then sharpens the tiny instrument, and gives it that polish familiar to the purchaser. There is also a machine by which needles are counted and placed in the papers in which they are sold, these being afterwards folded by the same contrivance.

THE most wonderful mountain in the world is Roraima, which lifts above its sloping sides a solid block of red sandstone about 2,000 feet high, some of the faces of which, according to Sir Robert Schomburg, are "as perpendicular as if erected with a plumb line." Its flat top is twelve miles long. The mountain sides are sloping and wooded to a height of 7,750 feet above the sea. Then rise the vertical walls of the vast sandstone formation. Cascades pour over the edge, the water falling 2,000 feet to the forests below, forming the sources of rivers.



VIOLA ORME, THE DAUGHTER OF A HUNDRED EARLS, PROMISED TO MARRY RONALD THORNDAL.

LORD KINGSLEY'S HEIR.

—101—

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was impossible even in her dazed, overwrought condition for Janet not to see that her words had been like a thunderbolt to both her hearers. It was the Marchioness who recovered first.

"It is only a trumped-up story," she said to her husband; "we know that Will would be incapable of a *salsalliance*; besides, he is engaged to Viola! Lord Kingsley, why don't you ring the bell and order the servants to remove this—this creature?"

But the Marquis took no manner of notice. Never had he felt so sternly towards his beloved wife as now. Without even a look or a glance in her direction he addressed himself to Janet.

"My dear young lady, I am not doubting your word, but I think you are the victim of an extraordinary mistake. You say you are my nephew's wife, and that your husband has met with a dangerous accident."

"He was shot at," said Janet, piteously. "I read it in the paper. I thought his accident explained the alliance I had thought so cruel, and I started at once."

"You know that I have two nephews!" said Lord Kingsley. "Did the newspaper account not mention the Christian name of the victim?"

"No; it called him 'Mr. Thorndale'; but I knew that would mean Will; the cousin who robbed him of so much is younger, he would only be 'Mr. Ronald.'"

"Be easy on one point, then," said Lord Kingsley, gently, "the man who was so cruelly shot at is Ronald Thorndale. You have travelled all these miles needlessly."

"And Will is safe!" Oh, the world of relief in her voice.

"He was perfectly well when he left here on—

—which day was it, Jessy?"

"Monday," replied the Marchioness, coldly;

"but, Lord Kingsley, surely you do not believe—"

"My dear wife," he said, very gravely, "I am sure of one thing; that this young lady honestly believes herself William's wife; of the rest I would rather say nothing until I have seen him."

Janet flung up her hands with a sob.

"Oh! what have I done! He will be so angry. He made me promise I would never tell anyone of our marriage; and, indeed, even when I came here I never meant to betray that I was his wife. It was only when I thought him dying, and was refused a sight of him, that I confessed our marriage."

"Be easy," said Lord Kingsley, simply; "believe me, no good ever comes of deception. It is better for both Will and yourself that I should know the truth."

Enter the butler with an air of apology. The driver of the fly had grown impatient, and wished to know if he was to wait any longer.

"Pay the man and dismiss him!" commanded the Marquis. "And tell the housekeeper to prepare a room for this lady. She is Mrs. William Thorndale, and will remain here for the present."

There was a dead silence; silence that could be felt, as the servant left the room; then Lady Kingsley said, reproachfully,—

"I never thought you would condemn Will unheard!"

"I do not condemn him," replied her husband. Then he turned to Janet. "I want you to tell me the story of your first acquaintance with my nephew, and all the events which led to your marriage."

Janet told her tale simply; there was the impress of truth in every sentence. She did not omit to mention her visit to Viola Orme and her prayer to her beautiful rival to give her back her lover. She spoke of her wedding and her residence at Camberwell-green.

"Mrs. Dale was very kind to me," she concluded; "she never got impatient when Will

forgot to send the money. It made me feel frightened when the days went on and I could not pay her; but she was always just as nice as when she had her rent regularly every week."

Lord Kingsley remembered suddenly that his brother-in-law had lodged at a Mrs. Dale's at Camberwell, and that this lady had stood to Ronald, for years, in the relation of aunt, while her daughter was the girl whom his mother had expected him to marry.

"I have heard of Mrs. Dale," he said, gravely; "she has a daughter—Alice!"

"Yes, Alice Dale was, oh, so good to me. She found out very soon that Will was not a commercial traveller, and that our name was not North, but she kept our secret faithfully."

"And she was kind to you?"

"As kind as she could be. I think," concluded Janet, "she was so happy herself she pitied me. You see Mrs. Dale and Alice are just wrapped up in each other, and they have plenty of money for all they want. Alice has never had a trouble."

The Marquis felt relieved. This description was not that of a love-lorn damsel. Since that last talk with Ronald he had quite acquitted the young man of any flirtation with his sometime cousin; but all the same he was glad to hear Alice was not wearing the willow for him.

"Jessy," said Lord Kingsley to his wife, "can you give me Will's address?"

"No. I expect him home to-night or to-morrow," she replied, coldly.

"Then Mrs. William Thorndale must remain with us until her husband returns," was the nobleman's ultimatum, and Lady Kingsley felt it was useless to oppose him.

As the three strangely-assorted companions sat on in the great drawing-room the sound of wheels was heard coming up the drive; but not one of the trio attached importance to it, for as Lady Ashlyn was momentarily expected to return from her visit to her home, both her sister and brother-in-law imagined it to be the Countess, while Janet was utterly past all mental effort; the well-trained butler did not deem it his duty to enlighten

William Thorndale as to the unexpected arrival, and so the young man marched into the hall utterly unprepared for the shock awaiting him.

"How is my uncle?"

"Much better, sir. Lord Kingsley is downstairs, and has even seen one or two visitors."

"Ah!" Will was desperately anxious to get his first meeting with his uncle safely over. "I think I'll go to him now. In the drawing-room, I think you said. By the way, how is my cousin?"

"The accounts of Mr. Thorndale are just the same. You will find my master and mistress in the drawing-room, Mr. William."

Will flung open the door and marched in.

"Ah, uncle, this is a good sight to have you among us again;" but then as he reached the hearth his gay, careless smile faded, and he stood as one smitten with craven fear, for there, a stone's throw from his uncle and aunt, sat the girl he had deceived. She saw him, and started up with a joyous cry of welcome.

"Oh, Will, I am so glad to see you. I thought it was you they had shot, and I came off at once to nurse you."

And then William Thorndale added another sin to his disreputable record, and denied his wife.

"I—I don't understand," he said, slowly. "Uncle, what is this—this young person doing here?"

"She is your wife," said the Marquis, dryly, "and as such I have welcomed her to the Abbey."

"I know this girl, of course, and I may have flirted with her; but I never married her. Why, uncle, you know perfectly that my one desire was to make Viola Orme my wife; and how could I have done that if I had already been a married man?"

There was the sound of a dull heavy thud; poor Janet had fallen to the ground unconscious. This cruel denial of her claims had been the last blow to her overladen heart.

Physical suffering always appealed to Lady Kingsley. She was still angry with Janet for what she termed her "unwarrantable impudence and presumption;" but she had some pity for her illness, and so the confidential maid and housekeeper were summoned, and between them poor Janet was taken upstairs to the room prepared for her and put to bed, while the Marchioness, with a dim feeling there must be some sort of explanation between her husband and Will, left them alone together.

"I hope you don't judge me harshly for this," began the younger man, nervously. "I grant I paid the girl a certain amount of attention, but—"

"Silence!" thundered the peer; "you had better hear me out before you utter any more falsehoods. I know everything, even to your stealing the cheque I entrusted to you for your cousin Ronald. I know also that you went through the form of marriage with this poor Miss Ingleby, at an obscure London church, and provided a home for her under the name of Mrs. North. I know that latterly you have utterly neglected her, and left her without money, so that but for the charity of her landlady she must have starved. I know all this, and I repeat that you are a disgrace to the name you bear."

"She is not my wife," said Will, doggedly. "Do you think I would have insulted Viola Orme by passing my suit if I had been a married man?"

"You may leave Lady Viola's name out of the discussion," said the Marquis sternly.

"Answer me one question. Do you deny that you went through the form of marriage with Miss Ingleby?"

Will hesitated.

"It was not a legal marriage. I took care of that."

"More shame for you," replied his uncle. "Pray what devilry did you resort to to invalidate it?"

"I married her under the name of North."

"And what then?" inquired the Marquis, who was no better up in the English marriage laws than his neighbours.

"If two persons are married under a name

which both of them know to be false, the ceremony is void," said Will. "I took a counsel's opinion on the point, and he assured me of this. Now, Janet Ingleby was perfectly aware that my name was Thorndale."

"I wonder what I have done to have such a nephew," cried poor Lord Kingsley in dismay. "The Thorndales have at least been honest—till now."

Will shrugged his shoulders.

"Such things are common enough."

"I hope not. I trust not."

"You must see yourself the girl is a mere nobody. Quite unfit to be a marchioness."

"If she was good enough for you to marry she was good enough to share any honours that might come to you," replied Lord Kingsley; "but on one point you need not be anxious. I thank Heaven that Ronald is out of danger, and so there is little chance of your wife becoming a marchioness."

Will turned livid with rage.

"I heard at the station there was no hope."

"We have thought it well not to take the public into our confidence as to Ronald's exact state. If the man who fired at him knew the crime had been useless he might try to devise another scheme for my nephew's murder."

"I suppose they haven't caught the fellow yet?"

"No one has been arrested."

"I should say it was a woman," remarked Will, diplomatically. "Some low born girl he had deceived and deserted when he became your heir."

"Naturally you attribute your own conduct to others," said Lord Kingsley. "As a fact, Warner, who has taken up the case most energetically, informs me he could put his finger on the culprit at once; but we have deemed it well to wait before accusing him, for being a man in very humble life we are both convinced he is only the tool of the real criminal."

"You mean that someone paid him to fire the shot?"

"Something like it."

A dead silence. Will dared not break it. At last he rose, crestfallen and abashed, to leave the room, but Lord Kingsley quietly intercepted his flight.

"One moment. You had better hear my decision now, and then you can consider whether or no to accept my offer. I can have you arrested for embezzling a certain cheque I entrusted to your care. The proofs of your guilt are overwhelming, and I need not tell you that the punishment would be penal servitude."

For an instant Will was staggered, then he recovered himself.

"You could not prosecute me on account of the old name; besides, it would kill Aunt Jessy."

"I shall prosecute you with the utmost rigour of the law," returned his uncle, "unless you agree to my conditions."

"And they are?"

"You will marry the poor girl upstairs over again, in your own name, and make a home for her abroad. If you do this I am willing to allow you five hundred a year as long as you never set foot on English ground or attempt any intercourse with my wife."

"You are cruelly hard on me, uncle."

"I am not. The punishment is light enough considering your offences. William, I do not choose to speak more plainly, but I have such an evil opinion of you that I do not consider your cousin's life safe while you remain in his vicinity."

"You'll say next that I am a murderer," said Will, sullenly.

"You are a murderer in will if not in deed," was the stern reply, "for you have never ceased to desire your cousin's death since you heard of his existence."

"And how long will you give me for consideration?" asked Will, mockingly. "A week?"

"Two days."

"Five hundred a year is a starvation pittance for a man of my position."

"You will not have a farthing more; and, as

your aunt's money reverts to her own family at her death she cannot leave you her fortune. It will be a long day before you earn five hundred a-year by your own exertions, specially as before you can make the attempt to keep yourself you will have spent some years in one of Her Majesty's prisons."

There was no mistaking his earnestness. Will knew perfectly his uncle meant every word he said.

"I don't suppose Janet would care to marry me when she knows I am a pauper."

"I shall not insult her by letting her know how you wronged her intentionally; I shall only tell her that, as it is still within the limits of possibility you may be my heir. It will be safer that you should go through the ceremony of matrimony again, that the union may be publicly announced to the world."

Will groaned.

"You have the whip-hand of me, and you know it. I still think you are cruelly hard on me, but I will marry Janet again if you wish it."

But he was never called on to keep his pledge. Lady Kingsley, alarmed at Janet's state, sent for Dr. Warner, and when he had examined her he said at once that there was no hope. The shock and agitation of the news she had read in the paper, the fatigue and suspense of the long, lonely journey had done their work. Will's cruel denial was but the last stroke. Poor Janet had only come to the grand old Abbey to die there.

And Lord Kingsley, generous and noble-minded as few men are, declared that no human creature should ever learn the wrong done the poor, trusting girl. During the day or two she lingered he always spoke of her to the household as "my niece," and when the end came he ordered a funeral worthy of his own rank, and arranged for the poor young stranger to rest in that portion of the churchyard sacred to the house of Kingsley.

In time to come a marble cross marked her grave, and the inscription on it was pathetically short and simple.—

"Sacred to the memory of Janet, wife of William Thorndale, grandson of the tenth Marquis of Kingsley. She died at Kingsley Abbey on Dec. 20th, 1892, aged 20 years. At rest."

Surely the last two words described poor Janet's end. Her life had been sad and stormy; at best with such a husband as Will Thorndale it must have been a troublesome one; and now she was safe for evermore from all trouble and pain. She was at rest.

And discussing the inscription with his old friend Dr. Warner, the Marquis declared it was simply the truth. Janet was the wife of his nephew, for she had married him in church and been true in all things to her nuptial vow.

While Mrs. Dale and Alice were still wondering over "Mrs. North's" strange silence, a tall, distinguished-looking man arrived at the house in Camberwell-green and asked to see its mistress.

"I have come to thank you for your kindness to my niece," he said, gravely, "the poor young thing you knew as Mrs. North; she was really Mrs. William Thorndale."

"And she arrived in time to see her husband? The account in the paper was so alarming, we feared she might be too late."

"She made a strange mistake," said Lord Kingsley; "it was my younger nephew, Ronald, who was shot, not William Thorndale; but I am happy to say Ronald is going on perfectly well. I believe that you have known him far longer than I have."

"Well," said Mrs. Dale, frankly, "Ronald was always a favourite of mine. If you'll believe me my lord, I often wondered how Silas (that's my brother) could be so hard on his own son. When we heard the story, and that Ronald belonged to a grand family it seemed to me to explain everything."

"You knew him well?"

"Very well. I liked him better than any of the others. He and my girl Alice were just like brother and sister."

"Only brother and sister, Mrs. Dale?"

"That's all, my lord. Ally's my only one,

and I'm in no hurry to lose her; besides, though Silas Thorn is my own brother I never could get on with him, and I shouldn't have liked my girl to be his daughter-in-law. There was never any love-making between Ronald and Alice, and when I heard of his changed fortunes I was right glad of it."

And then Lord Kingsley told her of Janet's death, and how her husband had gone to reside permanently on the Continent.

"I don't know much about suburban places," he concluded, "but I have been told they gossip a great deal. If there should be any scandal about that poor girl I beg you to do your best to silence it. She came here on her wedding-day, and when she left you she went straight to us. She died in my house, and was buried from there."

"She was a dear little thing," said Mrs. Dale; "but if you'll forgive my frankness, my lord, it's best she was taken, she'd have had a sorry time of it with her husband. When a man tires of a pretty young wife in less than six months she's not much to look forward to in the future."

And as he left Camberwell behind him it seemed to Lord Kingsley that nothing in all Will's long catalogue of sin had been quite so heartless as his treatment of the girl who had loved and trusted him so perfectly. Poor Janet Ingleby!

CHAPTER XXIV.

STEVEN STONE died in a fit before Will Thorndale left England, and with him died the story of that strange evil union between him and the young gentleman at the Abbey. Dr. Warner was by no means easy respecting his two patients. It seemed to him that both Lord Kingsley and Ronald had gone through too much not to need a thorough change before settling down to everyday life. He broached the subject to the Marquis, and found his own opinion seconded.

"It seems to me that that poor girl's fate haunts me here. At any cost I must get away from the Abbey. I have spoken to my wife, and she agrees with me. Our only doubt is where to go."

"Take a trip to Australia," said the enterprising doctor. "You'll not get back before the English spring, and you'll find the sea voyage will make new creatures of you."

But when Lord Kingsley mooted this to his wife she hesitated.

"Dear," he said, fondly, "don't you know that I will go nowhere without you, and that I will take you nowhere against your wishes?"

"Will Ronald go with us?" asked the Marchioness.

"Not if you object."

A faint quiet colour came into her cheeks.

"I think I have acted a cruel part," she said, slowly; "but you will never quite understand how much I loved Will. It was for his sake, because I could not bear to see another in his place, that I well-nigh hated Ronald."

The Marquis held his wife's hand tenderly, but he did not interrupt her by a single word.

"Elizabeth told me the truth," went on Lady Kingsley. "You had kept it from me in love, but she saw I fretted at the parting from Will, and thought it better I should know all. When I think of the cruel wrong he did that poor girl, when I remember that but for her providential escape Will might have blighted my own niece Viola's life, I feel as if I had been utterly deluded in him, and I cannot be too thankful I discovered his true character at last."

"And you would be willing for Ronald to go with us to the Antipodes?"

"I think it would be better for us all," she said, quietly. "I want to get accustomed to seeing him with you before he comes home to this house as its heir."

Lady Ashlyn and Viola went down to Plymouth and saw the passengers embark. They had rather improved on Dr. Warner's suggestion, and meant to spend three months in visiting the most important places in Australia. They would not be home till June.

"And even then I think we shall forego the

London season," said Lord Kingsley, cheerfully. "As Ronald never had a proper 'coming of age' I think we must do something to celebrate his birthday this year. Elizabeth, if you and Viola can tear yourselves away from the joys of London in June I will invite you to join our festivities at the Abbey."

"Viola," asked her mother the following day when they were preparing to return home, "what are your own wishes about next season?"

Viola smiled half-dreamily.

"It's only January, mother; need we decide our plans yet?"

"I have had an excellent offer for the house from a tenant who would like to take it furnished for six months from now. If you are really serious in telling me you are tired of fashionable gaieties it might be as well not to come to town this season."

"It would be delightful, if you are sure you don't mind."

"My dear child, my pleasuring days are over. I only go into society for your sakes, and since your name certainly was linked to some extent with that unfortunate William Thorndale it would be just as well if you were not seen in town this season, unless," and she half-sighed, "you mean to be reasonable, and make one of your suitors happy."

Viola shook her head.

"I know quite well whom you mean, Sir Edgar Carew and Lord Ives; but they may both have changed their minds since last season, and I couldn't marry either of them, even to please you."

"Then I will accept the tenant, and suppose you and I go abroad! We need not follow your uncle's example and set out for the Antipodes; but I really think it would be nice to get somewhere a little out of the beaten track. If I gave you *carte blanche*, Viola, where would you choose?"

"Cairo," replied the girl without a moment's hesitation. "I should like to feel I had been out of Europe just for once. My godfather is there too, and he would help us to see the lions."

"My dear, Edward Grey would never show you anything more lively than a scientific treatise; but, of course, his being there is an advantage; he could tell us the best hotel, and see that we were not swindled."

"Look here, mother dear!" said Viola; "we will go to Cairo, and when it gets too hot there we'll come back and stay a little while in Paris. I have heard that Paris is charming at Easter. We will have a real good time, and before we start we will each make the other a promise."

"I don't know of any promise I want you to make," objected Lady Ashlyn; but Viola only went on laughing.

"Your promise shall be to abstain from any hankering after a son-in-law. You shall not only cease to lament my single state, but shall pledge yourself not even to allude to the subject."

"Well," said the Countess, smiling, "and pray what will you do for me in return?"

"I won't make a single undesirable acquaintance," said Viola, archly. "I'll promise whatever fascinating strangers we meet on our travels to treat them severely until you are satisfied as to their position."

With ample means, and no one to consult, the mother and daughter had only to plan and to carry out. Within a week of the Kingsleys' departure for the Antipodes Lady Ashlyn and Viola had sailed for the East.

Mr. Grey met them on landing, and conducted them to his own hotel, where he had reserved rooms for them. The old servant was in the best of health and spirits, and had many questions to ask about his "boy," as he affectionately termed Ronald Thorndale.

"To tell you the truth, Elizabeth," he said to his old friend when Viola had left them *tête-à-tête*, "when I heard of that lad's prospects I actually went match-making like any old woman, for it seemed to me that he and Viola were made for each other."

"Viola will be an old maid," returned the Countess, sadly; "but, there, I have promised not even to mention the subject to her while we are abroad; and, really, after the awful revelations about Will Thorndale (whom I quite ex-

pected to be my son-in-law) I begin to think men are a bad lot, and that Viola is right to avoid them."

They had a cablegram announcing the arrival of the travellers at Sydney, and then there came a delay of several weeks before the first letter.

Lady Kingsley wrote in the best of spirits, and seemed delighted with the Antipodes (or as much as she had seen of them); but the Countess and Viola decided the new continent could not rival the delights of the old, and that Cairo was far more strange and entrancing than any colonial town.

"I am so glad Jessy writes in such good spirits," Lady Ashlyn observed to Mr. Grey; "she was so terribly depressed by what happened last December that I feared it would take her a long time to recover her cheerfulness."

"And there is a piece of bad news in store for her," said the *savant*, feelingly. "William Thorndale died last week at Etrepont."

"Died!" The Countess was honestly shocked.

"Are you sure? Who told you?"

"I read it in the paper. He was killed in a gambling *fracas*. The French law insists on very speedy interment, and he was buried in the little country grave yard. I don't think anyone at Etrepont has troubled to write to his relations. I suppose if there had been time to cable out to Kingsley he would have wanted Will brought home to sleep with his kindred."

"I hope the shock will not undo all the good her voyage has done Jessy. I wish you would write and break it to her husband."

"I have cabled out the news to him. I thought it better, for there was no insuring that he might not hear it suddenly. He will be able to choose his own time for telling his wife. It will cost her more grief than any one, for I never saw any one but a mother so wrapped up in a young man as she was in Will."

Of course, Viola heard the news. Her mother was surprised to find how much she seemed to feel it.

Perhaps the girl saw the astonishment, for she said gently,—

"Don't think I ever cared for William Thorndale as you once wished me to, mamma; but there are just two things in my intercourse with him that I shall never forgive myself."

"My dear child, you can have done him no harm; he treated you shamefully."

"But I held my tongue! Mamma, I have often wished to tell you. Janet Ingleby came to me with her story. I knew, I felt that it was true, and I offered to help her with money, besides assuring her I should never be her rival."

"I thought myself so generous for never telling you or Uncle Ronald; but I know now if only I had spoken out inquiry would have been made, and not only would poor Janet have been spared the wrong Will did her, but he must have been checked in his evil career."

"If I had only asked your advice! If I had only trusted to you and Uncle Ronald, Will might have repented."

"My dear! repentance was not in him," replied the Countess. "And what other thing troubles you?"

"Only this; when Ronald Thorndale was first discovered, I felt very sorry for Will, and let him be more friendly with me than I had allowed for weeks. He told me then that Janet Ingleby was a nervous, hysterical creature, whom he had assisted out of pity, and he actually made me believe that the story she had told me was all imaginary."

"Being sorry for Will, I snubbed Ronald. I was so afraid people would think I was 'nice' to him for his prospects that I was horrid."

"Well, my dear," observed the Countess, practically, "you are likely to have many opportunities of being nice to him. I have a very high opinion of Ronald Thorndale myself; considering his disadvantages, he is a most estimable young man. Of course, everything will depend on whom he marries; but if he fixes his hopes on some nice girl who knows a little more of society than himself I think in a few years' time no one will be able to guess from his manner that he spent the first twenty years of his life in obscurity. If only Jessy Maitland had not been

engaged to Dr. Dolby she would have been just the girl for Ronald, and I am sure he admired her."

It was a great relief to Viola that her mother never seemed to think she was a most suitable parti for Lord Kingsley's heir.

Viola was by nature unsuspicious, and it never dawned on her as among the possibilities that Lady Ashlyn might desire Ronald Thorndale as a son-in-law, yet warned by past failures, carefully conceal her wishes.

The Countess and her daughter went to Paris, and lingered so long in the gay French capital that they were still there when Lady Kingsley wrote to announce her return to England, and beg for an early visit from them at the Abbey.

"We are to have a grand garden party on Ronald's birthday, June 20th," she wrote, "and there is so much to do in the way of preparation that I am convinced I shall never survive my exertions if you and Viola do not come and help me."

There could be but one answer to this. Lady Ashlyn and her daughter reached the Abbey on the second of June, to find Ronald Thorndale firmly installed in his uncle's heart, while even the Marchioness—once so adverse—seemed to have a growing affection for her husband's heir.

Once, and once only, did she touch on the subject of the past, and that was when she was alone with her sister.

"Kingsley and Ronald both thought I should like to postpone the *fête* on my poor Will's account—Ronald especially begged me to do nothing against my feelings; but I told them that to me it was far less painful to think of my boy as dead, and safe from all sorrow, than to picture him a lonely exile from his home. Elizabeth, I know my husband was right. After such sins as Will's, it was impossible to keep him here; but I loved him through it all, and I am thankful I have not to think of him as a lonely disappointed man."

The Countess felt certain the nature of Will's end had been kept from her sister. She could only answer that at least it was a comfort to know Will was beyond all earthly cares, and that Ronald seemed an heir of whom the Kingsleys might well be proud.

"Yes, we hope he will marry young, and then I think we might give up this place to him and travel. I don't think I shall ever be quite happy at the Abbey again. Of course, we would come now and then to see the place, but it is not 'home' to me any longer."

Lord Kingsley was more cheerful in his confidences to his sister-in-law.

"I think poor Jack would have been proud of his boy, Elizabeth. Ronald is a worthy shoot of the old branch, and his days of poverty, the hardships of his youth, have done him no harm. I couldn't wish for a nobler heir."

"What about his mother?" asked Lady Ashlyn, curiously; "he must want to see her; but you could hardly ask her here."

"No; but while we were in London—we stayed a week after we landed—Ronald got Mr. Thorn to spare his mother to him for a few days, and took her down to Ventnor. It was there Jack died, you know; and I expect the poor woman had a good deal of happiness pointing out old scenes to Ronald. I ran down to see them one day, and she told me nothing could have brought her so much gladness as seeing her boy in his rightful place."

"And her present husband?"

"Has set up a shop of his own, and seems thriving in it. I hear he still preaches on most Sundays, but he has grown so far softened to us worldlings that he made no objection to his wife's visit to Ronald, and even sent the lad a civil message."

"And you are happy about the future? You are content with your heir?"

"Perfectly. I only wish that I may be as satisfied with Ronald's marriage as I am with him; but I fear he is not likely to settle young. I am not going a match-making for the lad (that turned out badly enough in poor Will's case), but it would be a happy day for me when I saw his wife."

The Countess hesitated.

"He might choose someone unworthy of him. He had far better keep single than marry beneath him."

The Marquis smiled.

"I'm not afraid of his doing that. The truth is, Elizabeth, the lad has set his heart on one bright particular star, and if she refuses to shine for him I much fear I shall not live to hear his wedding-bells."

"You mean he is in love?"

"Just so! has been, too, before ever he dreamed of his present prospects. He lost his heart once and for ever when the girl he loved seemed as far above him as a royal princess."

And meanwhile, in one of the pleasant alleys scattered about the Abbey grounds, Ronald was telling much the same story to Lady Ashlyn's daughter.

"I always loved you, dear, ever since I saw you first that June afternoon at the Academy. Viola, you might find a man more worthy of you, but never one who loved you more."

And so, with the sweet scent of the syringa filling the air with its fragrance, with a cloudless summer sky above their heads, these two plighted their troth—Viola Orme, the daughter of a hundred earls, promised to marry the man whose childhood and youth had been passed in obscure poverty.

When half the county flocked to the Abbey the next day to do honour to the *fête* the Marquis had devised to celebrate his heir's birthday a startling piece of news awaited them—namely, that Ronald was to marry Lady Viola Orme, the beauty of two London seasons.

And there the story proper ends, only that it needs a few words more to sketch the fate of others who have figured in its pages.

Alice Dale—to begin with her—remained in the pleasant house at Camberwell until her mother's death, and then she married a young suburban doctor who loved her well and fondly. She made his home a very haven of sunshine, and no one who saw them together would have guessed that Dr. Fraser was not Alice's first love, and that in her younger days her girlish fancy had had a very different hero.

Mrs. Thorn saw her son once or twice a year when he happened to be in London, and for the rest of the time was made happy by his letters. Strange that though her daughters lived with her and saw her every day Ronald and the gentle, careworn woman were far nearer each other than the mother and her lively, dashing girls.

Lady Ashlyn lives all the year round now at her pretty house near the Abbey, for Ronald and Viola reign at the Abbey as a kind of vice king and queen, the real owners spending most of their time travelling, and only paying brief visits to their ancestral home.

And Viola Thorndale is really happy, for she married the love of her life on the day that she wedded "LORD KINGSLEY'S HEIR."

[THE END.]

We are all familiar with the fact that a candle burns. But perhaps there are many persons who have never realised just why it burns and that a certain degree of heat is necessary in order to consume the cylinder of wax or tallow of which the candle is made. In the Arctic Regions candles will not burn satisfactorily at or below a temperature of 35 degrees C. The reason for this is that the surrounding atmosphere is so cold that the flame is insufficient to melt enough of the material for its own subsistence. The feeble heat can do little more than melt out a tubular space around the wick, therefore the flame is small and weak, and sometimes falls altogether. The light, enclosed in a small glass vase, works better, as the temperature is somewhat raised by being so confined, and enough wax melts to supply the flame.

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Docron" (purely vegetable), 2/6, from Chemists, 9/6, post free from Dr. Hous, "Glendower," Bournemouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

WHICH IS THE HEIRESS?

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE shock that Hester had unconsciously brought to Beatrice had been great, yet she realised that she would have to keep up appearances, though it cost her the greatest effort of her life. A strange peculiar smile came over the dark beautiful lips as she finished her toilet that evening, taking extra pains with every little detail, until she could not help owing to herself that she looked superbly beautiful.

She made up her mind that she would have a talk with Wyndham Powis at the first opportunity, and, if it lay in human power, undo the engagement between Hester and himself.

Notwithstanding the terrible ordeal through which Beatrice had so lately passed, her step in the corridor was sprightly, and she forced a smile to her lips as she sauntered out into the grounds, choosing a rose-embowered rustic seat, into which she flung herself in restless abandon.

The girl shuddered as she thought of Hester's words and the world of misery they had caused her, and, all unconscious of her rage, half aloud she rained down vows of vengeance upon Hester's hapless head.

A few yards distant, in the lilac-bordered path, she saw a dark-robed woman hurrying excitedly in the direction of the house.

Something intuitively warned her that there was danger afoot for her, and, scarce realising what she was doing, Beatrice sprang to her feet and confronted her.

To her surprise she found herself face to face with her mother. The girl gave a quick gasp and reeled back, nearly falling to the ground. The next instant she recovered herself, in a measure, and cried out:

"You—you here! I thought you were—"

"You heartless, wicked girl!" hissed the woman, in untold rage. "I have come here to make you settle for all you have done against me. You left me to die and among strangers, and you never came near me when you thought I was breathing my last breath. Shame on one so heartless! No punishment is too great for you. Ha! you thought I had drunk the poisoned wine you gave me, that I was dead and buried, and that I was laid low by your cunning."

Mary Seymour never forgot the look of horror in the dark, velvety eyes that the girl turned upon her, and the great waves of crimson that dyed both cheek and brow of the guilty face.

"Is it me you are blaming? You do me great injustice by your cruel suspicions. I never was guilty of such a wrong."

"I can prove you put poison in that wine you gave me. A well known chemist made the examination, and he will swear to that effect."

Beatrice's courage almost collapsed at this astounding piece of information; but she rallied by an effort, and said, in a well-controlled voice:

"If you will come into the house with me unobserved I can convince you beyond doubt that I am right and the wine I gave you was harmless. He only wanted you to leave him the bottle, as it was of extra fine quality."

The girl uttered the untruth in such a frank, innocent way that, almost against her better judgment, Mary Seymour was half inclined to believe her.

She allowed herself to follow her daughter into the grand old mansion, as she had insisted, and going up the servants' stairs, they were quite unobserved, and soon reached their destination, which was a disused store-room situated in an isolated part of the building.

They had reached it through different winding passages, and now stood before the ponderous, heavy door whose lock had not been used for so long that it was rusty and unyielding. Mary Seymour drew back with fear, and turned to retrace her steps, when the girl spoke.

"Do not be afraid of this place," she said in her softest and most persuasive of tones. "This old store-room contains rare old wines of all kinds. If you wish me, I will convince you that there was nothing wrong in the wine I gave you, by opening

any bottle you may pick out, and drinking the contents. Is that proof?"

"I may think better of it if you will do that," assented her mother, who had a strong liking for good wine.

After much difficulty Beatrice succeeded in opening the door, and holding the key in her hand, she motioned her mother to enter.

Mary Seymour had scarcely crossed the threshold ere the cruel, plotting girl snapped the door to after her, and she heard the spring-lock snap, making her a prisoner in the mouldy, darkened room, which contained neither window nor skylight.

Her horror and anguish knew no bounds as the peril of her situation dawned upon her.

The poor woman tore her hair and screamed at the top of her voice; but she might as well have saved her strength. No sound came from that isolated room that the outside world could ever hear, not even the faintest echo disturbed the stillness of the house.

With a desperate effort, that wrung from the woman cries of terrible torture, she groped round the wall, hoping to find some exit; but she might as well have encountered a stone wall.

She stood near the spot where Beatrice had left her, cold as stone, silent, motionless.

"Oh, help! help!" she cried—"help!"

She felt like fainting as no one responded to her frantic summons.

"Do not leave me!" she cried. "Beatrice, help me!"

She might as well have cried out to the grass, the ferns, the trees, for all the heed she took.

"Beatrice" she wailed out again, while the great drops of agony and exhaustion fell from her twitching brow, "for the love of Heaven, do come to me! I—I am fainting! I cannot breathe!"

The words came out in gasps; her tongue cleaved to the roof of her mouth, from which empty sounds proceeded—she did not move or stir—then she fainted from nervous exhaustion.

How long she lay in that swoon, Mary Seymour never knew. It was the torture of pain that woke her from it. Her face had grown very white and rigid.

Once more a faint remembrance of her position dawned upon her, and she cried out feebly:

"I remember, Beatrice. Oh, do not jest with me! I am in mortal pain—I, your poor mother. If you leave me—I shall die a cruel, lingering, torturing death!"

Beatrice knelt to the keyhole and hissed through it:

"I will not listen to you! No one will ever know your fate! I will leave you here to enter eternity alone, undisturbed! I will not be tortured by you any longer, if I have calculated rightly! Good-night, and forever!"

With that Beatrice was gone.

"Beatrice," she said, pitifully, "you are mad! Oh! do rescue me! For Heaven's sake, spare me! It will take a week for me to die—let me breathe God's air once more!"

But her daughter heard not her prayers or entreaties, and the poor soul spoke no more.

One, two, three days passed, and the girl did not go near her. No one knew of her presence there; and Beatrice went smilingly among them, undisturbed by the horrible murder on her hands.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE warm, sunny day following saw the beginning of a tragedy. Beatrice had come to the most terrible resolution that a woman ever reached. She had resolved to cover up the sin of Mary Seymour's being entombed alive by setting fire to that portion of the house, well knowing that the charred remains would tell no tales.

She watched closely for an opportunity to put her diabolical scheme into execution.

There came a time at last when she found a chance to execute her plan.

Wyndham Powis and Mr. Pelham had started for the city together on business. She had induced Miss Daly to go out for a stroll, and to

take Hester with her, so that she could take a short nap undisturbed, was her excuse.

The best plan that suggested itself to her was to go cautiously up the rear stair-way—after convincing herself that none of the servants were about—make her way to the disused garret, where the bundles and packages of years were strewn profusely about, and apply a match to the numerous papers there.

There would soon be a conflagration which nothing could check, and the adjoining apartment, which held her secret, would soon be smouldering in ashes.

Beatrice toiled up the long flights of stairs with swift, noiseless footsteps, and just as she reached the top she saw a woman emerging from one of the dark recesses of the passage.

She drew back among the shadows of an old wardrobe close by, and stood watching patiently a quarter of an hour or more for her to finish her sweeping and dusting.

Finally the girl's patience was rewarded by hearing the sound of her footsteps die away. A moment later she was in the dusty, cobwebby room alone, and hastily gathering about her an armful of papers, she touched a match to them and soon saw a tongue of flame leap from their midst.

The contents of the room soon ignited, spread, and burned like tinder, until Beatrice was obliged to beat a hasty retreat to escape bodily injury herself. A few seconds more, and the flames would devour the wood-work.

It was a horrible sight to behold, yet from the threshold Beatrice looked calmly on—yes, smilingly, at the work she had done, with no qualms of conscience upbraiding her.

Just at that instant she heard someone coming up the stairs. Once more she concealed herself behind the wardrobe, and waited till the intruder should pass on. Would the fire be discovered by this new-comer, and her plans frustrated after all? It was too awful a thought for her to contemplate.

She watched the stair-way with bated breath, and presently she saw, to her great relief, Hester, who proceeded to her room, which was situated next to the burning apartment. Evidently she had not discovered the flames, for she passed hurriedly into her room, and locked the door, as was her custom.

Hester's walk with Miss Daly had proved quite a fatiguing one, and she had gone to her chamber for a little rest.

Beatrice's joy over this state of affairs knew no bounds. She could not have wished for a more desirable chance to have disposed of the life of her rival than this unexpected trap the girl had unconsciously walked into.

Ten, fifteen minutes, half an hour passed by. The fire was raging slowly but surely, and had gained a headway that nothing could stop. Soon the whole building would be enveloped in the red, devouring flames, and in a short time would be a mass of smouldering ruins.

Finally the leaping, treacherous flames reached Hester's room, burned with fierceness the threshold, and shot up the panels of the heavy oaken door.

"Let her sleep within those walls," Beatrice said to herself. "Soon there will be only her bones remaining. She will trouble me no more. There will be no one left to dispute my rights, and I will be heiress to the Pelham millions, after all. What a fortunate girl I am. I owe the golden future that will be mine to my cleverness, my daring manoeuvres—not even stopping at human lives when they interfered with my interests."

For some minutes Beatrice tried to steady herself sufficiently to go down-stairs. It would soon be too dangerous for her to remain there longer.

Gathering her courage together, she went hurriedly down-stairs, and looking up dazedly she saw the dark form of Wyndham Powis looming in the distance.

He was walking down the pebbled walk in the shadow of the great magnolia-trees.

She looked at him with the same rapt, reverent gaze with which heathen worshippers look at the sun.

A great calm came over her as she saw him. He had come at last, this king among men, for whom she had waited so long.

Would he think it strange to find her there when the news of the awful catastrophe reached his ears?

She saw a noble face, full of fire and determination—the dark eyes, straight brows, and firm mouth—and she wondered what his feelings would be towards her after that day. She laughed at her doubts and drove away all her forebodings.

As he drew near the great tongues of flame and clouds of dense black smoke poured out from every window and crevice, fairly blinding her for an instant.

A look of horror and amazement flashed into his eyes, and he leaped with the agility of a panther to the step where Beatrice had sunk down, crying excitedly,—

"Good Heavens! the house is on fire. See! the flames are leaping this way with tremendous force. Is anyone inside the building, Beatrice? Where is Hester? Is she safe from fire? Tell me quickly, I pray!"

"Hester is safe. She—she left here for a walk some time after you left. Let us both go far away from here, Wyndham," she pleaded; "it is unsafe for us. See, the servants and Miss Daly—all—are saved!"

"Someone may be entombed in the fiery trap," he said, shaking her hand from his arm. "It is my duty, in the absence of Mr. Pelham, to see that no harm is done to anyone. I might save a human life if there is anyone in danger."

"There is no one in the house, I tell you," she answered, excitedly. "Let us be gone; I—I feel ill from fright. Take me away quickly—somewhere, anywhere, only far from this terrible scene of disaster. I cannot bear it."

"I must stay on the grounds and do my duty; there might yet be a chance of saving something," he replied, sternly. "Beatrice, go at once to the nearest neighbour's," he added, seeing that she was hysterical. "Hester is no doubt waiting there."

"No, no," protested Beatrice. "If you will go with me, I will gladly go away from this scene. If you stay here and face death I will remain here with you."

Wyndham Powis pushed past her, and amid the wild scene that followed, Beatrice rushed hither and thither like one dazed.

She had a faint recollection, which came to her afterward, of how Wyndham Powis had started for the door.

Before he reached it, his attention was riveted by shrill, piercing shrieks, and wild, piteous cries which rent the air, and added horror to the commotion.

"Save me! Oh, Heaven! save me!" a terror-stricken voice screamed brokenly. "Quick! Come, or I'll die here!"

"Great Heaven!" shouted her lover, in a very frenzy of agony, "it is Hester! Help! For the love of Heaven, help me to save her! I'll rescue you, my darling," he screamed, frantically, "or die!"

A glad murmur of approval rang through the panic-stricken crowd, as the young man started wildly on his perilous ascent to save Hester.

Beatrice, who had stood by mutely until this critical juncture, now sprung forward and frantically grasped young Powis's arm with a grip of iron.

"Wyndham, are you mad!" she cried out. "Are you mad to think of going to her? You would lose your own life by your rash act, and your life is far more precious than hers."

"Do not hold me back!" he cried, sternly. "Go! I will to save her, or die. If I had a thousand lives I would risk them all gladly to save my love, my poor Hester!"

"You will surely die, Wyndham," she shrieked. "Come back! Oh, do not go to her!"

But Wyndham Powis was deaf to her cries, her tears, her pleadings. He tore with might and main up the creaking, smoke-filled stairs, flight after flight, shouting aloud words of encouragement to the imperilled girl, unmindful of the flames that scorched his face and burned his hands, fighting his way like one bereft of

reason, who sees his last earthly treasure about to be ruthlessly torn from him.

The people, who were wild with fear and anxiety below, held their breath convulsively, afraid to speak or to move, a wild prayer to Heaven in their hearts that Heaven would spare the brave young rescuer and bring them both back to safety.

But that would require a miracle. His death and poor Hester's seemed certain. Hope died within their hearts.

The last look they had of Wyndham he seemed to have become startlingly pale. They expected, one and all, that he would swoon away, as he had been seen to reel once or twice, then he disappeared from sight.

Hester also was seen at the window no more. Just as Wyndham Powis reached the door, which she had in her frenzy unlocked, the poor girl swooned at his feet. A pair of strong arms raised her instantly, then he darted with his senseless burden down the smoking stairs, two steps at a time, fighting his way resolutely through flames and a deluge of water, and fell helplessly in the midst of the cheering crowd, who ministered unceasingly to Hester and himself. All voted Wyndham Powis the hero of the hour, yet they little thought how it was to end.

CHAPTER XXV.

Hester's thrilling experience rendered her unconscious, and Wyndham Powis, who had recovered as he gained *terra firma*, unclasped the girl's hands that held his arms so tightly, and placed her in charge of a group of sympathising friends. He never forgot the white face of the girl he had risked his life to save. The next few moments he was kneeling by her side, his noble face full of deepest anxiety.

"My darling, open your eyes and look at me," he cried. "Speak just one word. Let me look at that dear face once more."

She opened her eyes, then closed them slowly. Her lips trembled, yet no word came from them.

"Hester," repeated Wyndham Powis, "are you ill? I have counted the seconds, and the minutes seemed like hours. Will you not speak to me?"

A sense of great pain almost mastered her, yet with a strange, stifled gasp she breathed his name faintly.

There was one who looked upon this strange scene with bated breath and eager, gleaming eyes—that was Beatrice. If there be any truth in looks or actions, Wyndham Powis surely loves that girl, she said to herself. She watched them closely, with a long, shuddering sigh, then turned desperately away, burying her face in her hands. When she raised it again years of sorrow and pain seemed to have passed over her features.

"I will separate them," she said, hoarsely; "I know how!"

Anger flashed in her face, and for a moment she lost sight of her outraged love. A woman's love had darkened her youth and blighted her life, she told herself, despite all her past smiles, her soft words, her pretty, deceitful charms. It seemed to Beatrice that the wondering comments of the people would never end.

She was obliged to listen and to join in them with a pain at her heart so sharp, so keen, that it was with difficulty that she could refrain from crying aloud in her anguish.

She pressed nearer the crowd, and she saw Wyndham kissing Hester's white hand.

For one half moment she stood paralysed. It rushed upon her how much he cared for her rival; then, with a desperate effort, she recovered herself and moved back out of sight.

That one act darkened the face of the blue sky above her, threw a funeral pall over the fair, smiling earth, gave her a disgust for life.

In a few days she might be herself again, if she could but forget the terrible shock, the fate of Mary Seymour, her mother, the losing of Wyndham Powis.

The fever of unrest was upon Beatrice. She

could not bear the sight of the prostrate girl any longer, nor of Wyndham Powis, sitting beside her, doing his best to revive her, his heart in his eyes, all unconscious of the girl who, selfish as she was, would have given her life for him.

Beatrice turned away abruptly, and walked to the rear of the smouldering house, never once pausing to look behind her, her face white and rigid, her lips set, at what she had expected to see—the charred remains of Mary Seymour, whom she believed must have perished in the flames. She would never again confront her, never hold the terrible sword over her proud head.

As she neared the place where the workmen were busily at work Beatrice's agitation increased. She fancied that everyone would read guilt in her face—would point her out as the evil-doer who had planned to take two human lives; and Wyndham Powis, if he found out ever so faint an inkling of this dastardly act of hers, would never look upon her face again. It seemed strange, she thought, that love should cause so much misery to some, so much happiness to others.

Beatrice had no further time for reflection just then. She had come to the path that was blocked by rocks and debris that had fallen there, and she was obliged to come to a standstill and see for herself what the ruins contained.

There was a man standing near the edge of the wall who had apparently been the foremost among those who were engaged in excavating.

Beatrice went up to him, and touching him on the arm, said, in a voice that sounded scarcely human,—

"Did—did—has anyone been found in the ruins?"

"Eh?" he answered. "Is there anybody you've missed?"

Beatrice turned a ghastly white, and answered, evasively,—

"One never knows what is unearthed or who is missing until people begin to find out what losses there are. Do you expect to make any further search?"

"I hardly think it necessary, madame," was the rejoinder. "We have not run across any bodies so far. The people and the servants all seem to have made their escape, and there were no guests at the place, I've heard, so there's no human bodies to unearth. You should be thankful for that, even if all else of your belongings are lost in the fire!"

There came to Beatrice an impulse, then and there, to tell this workman that she had seen a strange woman enter the house a short time before the conflagration, and that she had watched anxiously for the unknown person's reappearance, but all in vain, that there was no doubt she had perished in the raging fire.

But a second after she thought she must certainly be losing her reason to think of telling a stranger the secret she had kept locked in her breast so long, and which was unknown to a living soul. Anything would be better than such an admission.

If she said one word the guilt would be laid at her door, and she would in all probability suffer the consequences.

Beatrice's brain reeled, her head burned, and her heart beat with great irregular throbs as the truth forced itself upon her. Her mother must have made her escape some way from the burning building. There was not the slightest trace of her to be found.

For a moment or so Beatrice scanned the crumbled walls keenly, then she left the ruins with a desperate feeling, more unhappy than she had ever been before, her life marred, the only man she had ever loved madly in love with her rival, this girl who stood between her and happiness.

What a bitter price she was paying for this empty luxury.

Upon her return to the front of the house she saw that most of the people were gone. She was just in time to catch a distant glimpse of Wyndham Powis supporting Hester's head on his breast, as the soft-cushioned carriage which had been placed at his disposal rolled away.

The few lookers on who still remained at the old ruins wondered what had changed Beatrice so greatly. All the brilliancy of her bright nature was changed to recklessness.

She was never for a second without the most intense excitement visible about her. A worn look had come upon her that did not belong to youth. Her eyes were very bright, but they noticed that there was a fever in their brightness.

There was a hectic flush on the radiant face that told of unrest and secret worrying—every token of a mind ill at ease.

Those whose curiosity led them to survey the ruins noticed that the fever of unrest which had come upon the girl had become greater still as she followed them upon their tour of inspection, suggesting eagerly that a better search ought to be made to find out whether any of the servants, or their friends, who dropped in to see them once in a while, should be lying concealed among the ruins.

There was hardly a single moment, when she found herself alone, that her heart, callous as it was, did not cry out in rebellion against the deed she had done. There was never an instant when she was freed from the torture of suspense.

Beatrice found herself beset by impulses to tell them, one and all, just what had happened; but that would mean to condemn herself, to give up the great wealth she had plotted and planned for, even to the hartering of her soul. The resolution would flash upon her, then the unhappy girl would say to herself,—

"I cannot give it up, as I would have to. It is the best part of my life. I cannot endure poverty after having riches."

She stood watching the fallen timbers. The winds no longer wafted to her rich warm gusts from odorous flowers; it bore to her a wailing sound that made her shudder, and seemed to echo the words, and everyone to hear them.

"Love of riches, ambition, and false love crept into your heart and laid at your door a deadly sin."

"Oh, if the ghost that haunts me would only stay here," she told herself, "no one would ever be the wiser, and I might be happy once again."

Beatrice wanted to be alone. She passed over the green lawn, past the great sheaves of white lilies and fragrant roses, until she came to the grove near by. Tall branches met over her head and formed a deep shade.

The dying sunshine came through the dense green foliage with a mellowed light; the grass was thick and velvety, and studded with scarlet creepers.

A fallen tree, with its cushions of moss, lay half across the path. Beatrice sat down upon it and hid her face in her hands. She had no right to look up at the smiling summer heavens.

She had just given utterance to one of her bitter reflections, when, looking up, she saw a dark figure standing before her. She saw, to her intense surprise, the dark, searching face of the woman she had so cruelly doomed to death—Mary Seymour.

A look of terror seized the girl. She would have fallen to the earth in merciful unconsciousness, had not the woman grasped the swaying form tightly.

"Wicked girl!" said the woman. "So you thought your fiendish work had starved me to death, or that I had perished in yonder fire, eh? You forgot that the shelves in that dark room were heavily weighted with bottles of wine, jars of preserves, and dried fruits, upon which I lived until that terrible fire came, when I was miraculously rescued."

"It is hard to suffer such agony from my own daughter, but it is well to know you as you are—one of the most depraved, cruel-hearted, cold, merciless creatures that ever lived on earth. As such I will denounce you to the world. You shall not live in luxury and happiness any longer. I will execute my words. You will be known in your true light throughout the breadth of the land. You will be an outcast, a beggar, and more—a would-be murderess!" she hissed.

(To be continued.)

PLIGHTED FOR LIFE.

(Continued from page 569.)

"Indeed, it is," I assented, fastening my eyes on the fair scene that lay like a panorama below—a beautiful stretch of forest, woodland, vale, and dell, belted, in the far distance, by great purple mountains, purpled with the swift-gathering haze of the autumn day, that was beginning to blot and blot far-away outlines and dim the radiance of the steady sunshine that shone on the near, newly-reopen fields, till the stubble glittered like blades of spun silk, and the fading bracken and leafage of the woods and commons shone like tawny gold.

"I can fancy myself 'lord of all I survey' up here—so far from the 'madding crowd.'"

"Yes, you can easily do that."

"I wish I could as easily fancy myself lord of something else, of far greater value to me," he said, significantly, glancing at me.

"We can't have all we wish for," I answered, with a carelessness I did not feel, for I was beginning to be a little, just a little, bit afraid of Mr. Archdale and his passionate glances—afraid that he would say words that would not be pleasant for me to hear; and murmuring something about the pictures, I turned away, and, keeping very close to Bessie and her sporting clerical friend, commenced the descent.

CHAPTER VII.

THE portrait gallery was a fine oak-panelled room, with side and top-lights, that showed off to advantage the numerous pictures that lined the dark walls.

No wonder the master of Archdale Hall was proud of the family portraits, for they represented a goodly crew of dames and squires from the time of the Plantagenets to the present era. There were stout gentlemen of bluff King Hal's reign, ladies of Elizabeth's Court, in ruff and stomacher; and-faced heroes of Jacobitish tendencies, and warriors who frowned fiercely under full-bottomed wigs; while scantily-clothed females, similar to those depicted by Sir Peter Leely, were not few and far between, but smirked and languished from the canvas on all sides.

I duly admired the beauties, the stern warriors, and the wicky dandies, and listened to the little anecdotes and stories Mr. Archdale had to tell of each one.

"That is my grandfather," he remarked, pointing at the full-length portrait of a handsome, wild-looking man, with buckled shoes, wide-skirted coat, and powdered hair, that showing up the dark, glowing eyes, made them look as though they gleamed and sparkled.

"Very good-looking. He is like you!" I exclaimed.

"Thanks for the compliment," he laughed. "He was very good looking, but came to a bad end, as I hope I shall not."

"Indeed!" I ejaculated, feeling much interested.

"Yes. His misfortune arose out of an unrequited love. We Archdales were and are somewhat fierce. We hate fiercely, and love fiercely, overpoweringly, to the death." His eyes sought mine as he spoke, and I shivered from head to foot, as though the balmy west wind that stole in through the open windows was chill as the biting northern blast of mid-winter. "His ghost is said to haunt this gallery."

"Is it?" I cried, quickly, glad of anything that would give me an excuse for following the others, who were filing out by the further door. "Then let us leave his domain at once, lest he comes to object to our being here," and I made a movement to follow the others, but he laid his hand on my arm.

"Stay," he said, quietly. "I have something else to show you—something for your eyes alone."

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and he turned to a picture covered with a curtain, that hung in a recess opposite the largest window; and pulling a cord, drew back the drapery, disclosing the picture of a lovely woman, with short, clustering black hair, luminous brown eyes, and a pale, pale face, white as new-fallen snow, on which the beams of the setting sun shone redly, giving life to the mobile lips and the gleaming eyes.

"Who is it like?" he asked.

"Myself!" I exclaimed, utterly astonished at the remarkable likeness. "Who is she?"

"She was my wife," he said, in a curious smothered tone, and glancing at him I saw he looked ghastly.

"Your wife! I did not know you were married!"

"No, and few others either. It is fifteen years since she died, and I lost her within a year of our marriage."

"How sad," I murmured.

"Ay, sad, indeed! Do you pity me?" he demanded, abruptly, bending those strange dark orbs on me.

"Very much."

"And pity is akin to love."

"Not always," I answered, hurriedly, not at all liking the turn the conversation was taking, and wishing myself anywhere but where I was—anywhere out of the range of his glance, which held and fascinated me like the serpent's does the prey he means to destroy.

"I hope it is in this case," he said, earnestly, taking my reluctant hands in his, "for I want you to love me as I love you. You are like her," nodding at the pictured face, which seemed to regard us intently—"wonderfully like. For fifteen long and weary years I have mourned her; now—now I want the empty place in my heart filled, the silence and solitude banished from my home. You can make me happy, can drive the demon—memory, that sits ever grinning at my elbow, away. For as you sit by my hearth, and I look at you, I shall fancy that you and she are one, that she has come back from the land of shadows to gladden me once more with her sweet presence, and all the clouds of misery that have enveloped me so long will vanish away."

"Oh! Mr. Archdale, I am so sorry," I cried, shrinking away from his passionate gestures and looks; "indeed, I can't be your wife."

"Why not?" he asked, and over his face came a dull, grey look.

"Because—because I—I do not love you," I faltered.

"That is nothing," he cried, joyfully; "the love will come. My passion will win a response from you."

"No, no," I almost screamed. "I know I should never—never care for you in that way."

"Then why have you encouraged me?" he queried, coldly.

"I—I—did not mean to," I stammered feeling horribly guilty and horribly afraid.

"Women never do, they say. I certainly thought from your manner that you would listen to my pleading, and say 'yes' when I asked you to be my wife."

"I am so very—very sorry."

"No doubt, now that the mischief is done. But beware," he continued, with a rapid change of manner; "we Archdales have a dash of the tiger in our composition—beware! You shall be the tiger's bride, or mate with no one. Have you a lover?" seizing my hand again, and braining it in his rough clasp. "Take care, if you have. Say adieu to him, for his sake and yours."

"You forget yourself," I said, coldly, struggling to escape from his detaining grasp.

"No, I don't. I wish I could—forget for a time, only a little time, the dreary past. You can make me do it, and you shall—by Heaven you shall!"

His face flushed, his eyes gleamed luridly, his lips drew near to mine, but, with a stifled shriek, I wrenched myself free, and flying the whole length of the gallery reached the stair-head, and with two bounds was in the hall.

I almost tumbled into Dick's arms, for he was standing at the bottom, and but for his supporting hand would certainly have fallen.

"What on earth is the matter?" he exclaimed, alarmed, no doubt, out of silence by my appearance and manner.

"Oh, Mr.—Mr.," I began, and then, remembering the necessity for concealing what had passed, at any rate from him, I stammered,—"I—I saw something up—up there!"

"Ah! the ghost, I suppose," with a little sneer.

That sneer went a long way towards calming me; and saying "Just so" with the utmost coolness, I walked into the library, where aunt was dispensing afternoon tea, and sat down very near her. Dick followed me, and a few minutes later our host entered.

I gave one swift look, and saw that though deadly pale, there was no other outward sign of his recent violent emotion, but after that I carefully avoided meeting his glance, and kept my eyes glued to the floor, while I experienced a tremendous sense of relief when the barouche came round, and we set off on our homeward way, Mr. Archdale giving my hand an awful squeeze as he helped me into the carriage.

I was anything but happy during the next few days. I dreaded to see him appear, and when he called hid myself in my room and pleaded illness. I could not face his passionate, constraining looks. The dread I felt was, to me, unaccountable, until about a week later, when aunt, as she read an epistle from an old friend, who knew the Archdales, gave vent to sundry expressions of surprise.

"What is it?" I asked at last, for her ejaculations came fast and furious, while even dad looked up from his perusal of the morning paper, and regarded her with mild surprise.

"Anything the matter?"

"Matter? Yes, indeed, a good deal is the matter. The man ought to be locked up. It's quite shocking to let him be at large," she returned, excitedly.

"Who is the man?"

"Mr. Archdale."

"Mr. Archdale!" I repeated, all attention now.

"Yes; there is madness in his family."

"Ah!" I said, sharply, understanding at last the look in his eyes which had puzzled me so sorely.

"He killed his wife!"

"Aunt! impossible!"

"He did! Mrs. Lorraine says so!" flourishing the letter.

"If he is a murderer why is he at large?"

"Oh, he didn't actually kill her with his own hands!"

"What did he do, then?"

"He was seized with a temporary fit of insanity ten months after their wedding-day, and threatened to stab her. The shock was so terrible to her—discovering that she had married a madman—that her child was born, and she and it were both dead before the week was out."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed dad; while I sat in speechless horror, understanding many things that had been mysteries to me before.

"Dreadful, indeed! And that is not all. His grandfather shot his wife through the heart, and then blew out his brains, because he found out she had married him for his money, and not for love, as he imagined!"

"Nice people to know!"

"Very!" agreed Mrs. Ellis, sarcastically. "Allan Archdale was five years in a lunatic asylum."

"I am not surprised to hear it. I don't at all like the look of him. You had better be out when he calls again, Jane."

"You may be sure I shall not see him," rejoined aunt, with an uneasy look at me.

My feelings I cannot describe. I literally quaked with fear. This maniac had sworn that I should be his wife; refusal would madden him, and he would most likely resort to the argument of the knife. For me, or, if he found out, for

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the man I loved! What horror in the thought!

My life became a burden; and after a week of agony, during which I hardly dared to venture outside the door, and my would-be suitor called twice, and was refused admittance, I went to dad, and told him that I wanted to go home—to our miniature mansion on the banks of the Thames.

One sharp glance he gave at my white face and heavy eyes, and then said,—

"Very well! We will start to-morrow," thinking probably that I was fretting about Dick, and would be better out of his immediate vicinity.

True I was; but the other cause was what weighed my spirits down most, and made me utterly wretched; for I feared for his life if my savage suitor discovered we had ever been dear to each other.

With what delight, then, did I hear him consent to my request! It seemed to me that there might be a chance of escape for me in sudden flight; and after dinner, as I stood by the open window, hope for him—Dick—and myself stirred faintly in my heart.

"Why don't you go out and take a turn in the garden?" suggested aunt; "you look so pale. It might do you good. Here, you can take this wrap."

For a moment I hesitated, then reflecting that as Mr. Archdale had called that afternoon, and ridden away with a very black look on his brow, after having been told we were out, he would be at home, and I quite safe in our own grounds, I took the shawl and strolled out.

The night was soft and warm, and moonlit; the air sweet with the scent of many flowers, and the perfume of the dew-drenched turf. All was so peaceful, so calm, that I wandered on, unthinking, till I came to the larch spinney, and then stood leaning on the gate, watching the play of the moonbeams on the deep pond that lay on the far side of the spinney.

I don't know how long I stood there, whether a minute or an hour, but a hand touching my arm roused me from my reverie. With a start I turned and confronted Mr. Archdale.

"You!" I exclaimed, stepping back with a shiver of horror.

"Yes; are you glad to see me?"

"Ye—es," I faltered, not daring to say no, as I glanced at his face, which looked wild, and white, and drawn in the cold moonbeams.

"Then show it, love, kiss me."

He bent his face towards mine, but I wriggled away.

"Why won't you kiss me?"

"I—I—can't—Mr. Archdale."

"Why do you call me that? I am Allan—your Allan. Don't you know me, wife?"

"You are mistaken," I cried, desperately, shaking from head to foot with fear, for I saw the man was mad. "I am not your wife."

"Take care, take care," he said, warningly, "you'll wake the tiger that sleeps within me. You are mine—mine!" and he pressed nearer, his lurid eyes gleaming and burning.

"You forget yourself," I said, with all the firmness I could assume, "and the respect due to me. Let me pass."

"Why should I let you go, now that I have found you after so many dreary years of waiting? You must stay with me always, wife, darling," he flung both arms round me, and held me for a moment crushed to his breast, the next I had torn myself free, and was flying towards the house, screaming for help, swiftly followed by the infuriated maniac.

At my screams a man came running towards us, and I saw it was Lord Devedale.

"Dick—Dick," I cried, "save me—help me," and clung to him.

"What is it—what is it?" he asked, drawing me to him, but ere I could answer the madman was on us.

Something bright glistened in his hand, and he struck straight at me. Dick warded off that blow with his arm, and I felt the warm blood splash in my face. Quick as lightning the dagger was withdrawn, and Archdale struck again with all his force; the second blow fell on my lover's

breast, and with one low cry he reeled to the ground, dragging me with him.

Archdale looked at us a second, and then tossing the murderous weapon high in the air, shouted,—

"My bride! My bride in life and death!" and fled away in the darkness of the night.

The moment I saw Dick stretched lifeless and bleeding on the ground the scales fell from my eyes, and I realised how dearly—how passionately—I loved him still, and horror and fear robbed me of consciousness.

When I came to I was lying in my own room at aunt's, and dad and she were bending over me.

"Dick," I murmured, feebly. "Where is Dick?"

"He is here," answered my father.

"Is—he—?" My lips refused to form the dreaded word.

"No, he is not dead."

"Is he much hurt?"

"Some nasty stabs."

"Will he recover?"

"We hope so," he replied, guardedly.

"I must go to him."

"You cannot. You must lie still."

But I sobbed so pitifully that they let me get up, and helped me into aunt's room, where Dick was lying still and quiet, with one bandaged hand outside the quilt, and his pale face buried in the pillows.

At the sight of him—so weak and helpless-looking, I burst into silent tears, and, kneeling by the bed, kissed the poor injured hand that had saved me from the murderer's knife.

The wound in his breast was deep and dangerous, but not, thank Heaven! fatal. After many weary days of suspense and anxiety he began to mend slowly, and recover his lost strength.

I felt I could not do enough for him, and, only that they would not let me, would have nursed him entirely myself. This was not permitted, so I had to content myself with making his room bright with flowers, reading to him, and doing all I could to cheer him.

I was free from Mr. Archdale. He was safe in a private lunatic asylum; still, though that fear was off my mind, my cheek grew paler and paler, and my eyes more and more day by day, for I knew when Dick could move he was to go to Ventnor, and that meant that I must part from him, the man, I knew now, I loved better than my life, my pride, or anything in the whole world.

"You ought to go out; you look pale," he said to me the first day he was brought down to the drawing-room, as he lay looking out at the garden.

"I do so. I have been out this morning."

"Then you shouldn't look so white."

"Shouldn't I?"

"No. Haven't you recovered from the fright that fellow gave you?"

"Yes, from that, but not from something else," with a deep sigh.

"What is that?"

"The way I treated you. Oh, Dick! "falling on my knees beside him, and fondling his hand: "can you ever forgive me?"

"Yes, dear. I forgave you long ago," he answered, gently, with a little wistful look at me from the dear blue eyes that went straight to my heart and pierced it.

"But—but—you—you—don't—love me—as you did!"

"Who says I don't?"

"I know you can't."

"What does this mean, Ruby?" he queried, doubtfully.

"It—it—means—that—that—I was wrong," I whispered, faintly. "That I love you more than ever."

"My darling!" and drawing me to his breast, he said,—

"We will float down the stream of life together, then, sweetheart, after all."

"Yes, after all," I answered, shyly; and as I raised my eyes to the debonaire face I felt that fate had been kinder to me than I deserved, since my love-dream held for me so happy an ending.

[THE END]

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Use DR. MACKENZIE'S ARSENIC TOILET SOAP.—Deliciously and expensively perfumed, 1s. per tablet, 3 in box, 2s. 6d. post free; unperfumed, 6d. Absolutely harmless. This soap can also be had without arsenic. Have Dr. Mackenzie's or none.

FACETIÆ.

SHE: "Everybody says you married me only for my money." He: "But I didn't, dear. I know you look it, but I didn't."

STAGE MANAGER: "She's positively getting too old for the ballet." LAMBE: "Give her the part of the child wonder."

"You're a nice little boy, Tommy," said Mr. Newman. "That's what they all say when they first meet sister," Tommy remarked.

"SPENT Sunday at Brighton, eh? Which hotel did you stop at?" "The hotels we stopped at were too numerous to mention."

FIRST VILLAGE GOSSIP: "Do you believe that awful story that they are telling about Miss Prim?" Second Village Gossip: "Yes. What is it?"

BILKINS: "How are you and Miss Smarte getting on? Does she smile upon your suit?" WILKINS: "Smile upon it! She actually laughs at it!"

COHENSTEIN: "So when she says, 'Moses, do you love me?' I tell her: 'Rachel, I'd be not lakal to make a man ingratinate himself! Show me your pank-pook before I rebly.'"

"No, darling," said a mother to a sick child; "the doctor says I mustn't read to you." "Then, mamma," begged the little one, "won't you please read to yourself out loud?"

"Well, my little boy," said the urban visitor, "what does mamma give you for being good today?" "She doesn't give me anything," said the youngster, in an injured tone. "I am just good for nothing."

"Yes, I've got rid of that girl. Why, do you know she actually planted herself in the parlour when I had company and entertained them!" said Mrs. Stoopid. "You don't say! How she will be missed!" replied Mrs. Sarcastic.

YOUNG LAWYER (on his first case): "I'd give anything to win this case, but I don't see how it is possible to clear you." Prisoner (modestly suggesting): "I don't s'pose ye'd like to swear yer committed the crime yerself, would yer?"

A CERTAIN minister, while preaching, said that every blade of grass was a sermon. The next day he was amusing himself by mowing his lawn, when a parishioner said: "That's right, doctor; cut your sermons short."

To his aged parents in far-off Ireland they brought back the sad story: "Your poor son Pat," they said—"alas! he was captured by cannibals and boiled alive." "That was just like Pat," sobbed the broken-hearted mother; "he always was a broth of a boy!"

"How was the play?" "It was very good," replied the meek man. "I'm glad you enjoyed it." "I don't mean to say that I enjoyed it. I merely said it was very good. I base that opinion on the fact that the lady with the large hat who sat in front of me laughed audibly several times during each act."

An artist who was staying in Devonshire, when taking a walk one day, passed a very pretty cottage, which he thought would make a nice picture, so he went to the door and asked the tenant, who was an old lady, if he might paint her cottage. She replied, "Lor, no man, 'twould be a waste of material; it has only just been white-washed."

The physician pondered on the case for a few minutes before he ventured an opinion. "I think your husband needs a rest more than anything else," he said at last. "If he could be convinced of that—" "But he refuses absolutely to listen to me, doctor." "Well," returned the physician thoughtfully, "that's a move in the right direction."

"Sun," said Patrick, rubbing his head with delight at the prospect of a present from his employer, "I always mane to do me duty." "I believe you," replied the employer; "and therefore I shall make you a present of all you have stolen from me during the year." "Thank yer honour," replied Pat; "and may all yer friends and acquaintances trate you as liberally."

"George," she said in a low voice, "would you make a great sacrifice for my happiness?" "Certainly," he replied. "Would you quit smoking for my sake?" "Quit smoking for your sake!" he repeated. Then, after a silence, he exclaimed, hoarsely, "I can refuse you no thing. I will quit smoking for your sake. Hereafter when I smoke it will be for my own sake."

An illiterate young man once got a friend to write a letter to his sweetheart for him. The letter was rather prosaic for a love letter, and he felt that an apology was due to his sweetheart for its lack of tender nothings. It was as follows: "Please excuse the mildness of this hie letter, as the chap wot's 'ritin' it is a married man, and he says he can't bide any soft soaping—it allus gives him the spazums."

PAT was a very ugly man, and was fully conscious of his lack of good looks; but this fact did not deter him from being a "lady-killer." One day, as he was crossing a ditch, he met a girl. As she was about to pass him, he said, looking archly at her: "Oh, you pretty, pretty lass!" The girl tossed her head, and replied: "I am sorry I cannot return the compliment!" "Fate, you could if you had lied as I did," said he, as he walked away from the indignant maid.

"Is the house very quiet?" he asked, as he inspected the room that had been advertised to let. "No," said the landlady, wearily, "I can't truthfully say that it is. The four babies don't make much noise, for they never all cry at once, and the three pianos one gets used to, and the parrot is quiet sometimes; but the man with the clarinet, and the boy that's learning to play the flute, do make it noisier than I wish it was."

"That's all right!" said the man cheerfully. "Live and let live is my motto! I'll take the room and move in to-morrow, and the little things you mention will never disturb me. Good-morning." And it was not till he was moved in and was settled that they learned his occupation. He played a trombone in an orchestra.

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JOHN NOBLE, of Manchester, have justly earned the reputation of producing really up-to-date costumes at marvellously low prices. As an instance of this, we have pleasure in directing the attention of our readers to an excellently designed skirt and bodice, known as Model 647, made in their special Cheviot Serge, and offered at the low figure of half a guinea, or the skirt alone at 5s. 6d. This and the other costumes offered can be relied on to wear well and give entire satisfaction. Ladies about to make purchases in this direction would do well to give John Noble a trial.

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Please mention LONDON READER when ordering. Dept. No. 75.

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Model 645.—A young lady's costume in John Noble Cheviot Serge, bodice made with prettily gathered front and shaped belt. Well-cut Skirt.

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In John Noble Cheviot Serge, with Bodice made Norfolk Fashion; the centre boxpleat being carried to the neck. With pointed saddle front; saddle and sleeves lined. Price only **10/6**; carriage **6d.** extra. Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage **6d.** extra.

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SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales possesses the most curious paper weight in the world. It is the hand of an Egyptian mummy.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS CHRISTIAN will reside for several months to come at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, where they are shortly to receive a visit from Prince and Princess Aribert of Anhalt. Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein is to spend some time at Cimiez with the Queen.

THE little Princes of York will go for the next two months or so to their grandmamma, the Duchess of Teck, who is only too delighted to have her Royal grandsons under her charge. When they return home it will probably be in company with a new denizen of their nursery, who will shortly make his or her appearance in the world at White Lodge.

SINCE the Conquest, save and except King George III., three only of the thirty-seven Sovereigns (inclusive of the Queens Jane and Mary II.) have even passed their seventieth birthdays—viz., George II., William IV., and her present Most Gracious Majesty. Nine have overstepped "three score years," half a dozen have passed the half-century, double that number have exceeded forty years, three have passed thirty, and the remaining three never attained majority. Up to date the united ages of the six Monarchs of the House of Hanover have totalled to about four hundred and forty-four years.

THE Queen's wish is to have a private Thanksgiving Service, attended only by herself, the Royal Family, and the Court, at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace, on Tuesday, June 22nd, with public services on the same day at Westminster Abbey and at St. Paul's Cathedral. In this case the Queen and Royalties will drive in procession from Buckingham Palace to St. James's by way of Constitution Hill, Piccadilly, and St. James's-street, returning by Pall-mall, Charing-cross, and Whitehall. It is feared that the Queen's strength would be unequal to the fatigue of a State drive from Buckingham Palace to the City and back.

Few Princesses have made themselves more truly loved and respected in their husband's country than the Crown Princess of Greece, the third daughter of the Empress Frederick. Her Royal Highness has, since her marriage, done everything in her power to promote the good of the people, and through her efforts numerous charitable institutions have been founded, her last achievements having been a home for little children and a kitchen for the poor. The Princess is wonderfully popular in Greece, the people looking upon her as quite one of themselves, she having adapted herself to the surroundings, and shown that she looks on Greece as her real home. This King George has never succeeded in doing. He remains partly Danish and partly English, but is not a bit Greek.

THE Queen will spend more time than usual in Buckingham Palace this year, but as a matter of duty, not choice. The truth is, Buckingham Palace, with its vast and stately salons, is admirable for great Court ceremonials, but is almost wholly lacking in that air of homelike comfort which Her Majesty values above all else. On Drawing Room days, and when the huge apartments are being used for State balls or concerts, when the stately corridors are banked with flowers, the superb staircase guarded by picturesque Yeomen of the Guard, the buffets laden with priceless plate, the rooms filled with the life and colour and beauty contributed by a thousand or two of the *finer fleur* of the aristocracy, the Palace is seen at its best. But as a mere residence, even for royalty, it is somewhat oppressively stately and dull, the beautiful grounds of forty acres or so being the only really attractive feature of the place. The Queen never looked upon Buckingham Palace as "home," and it is not surprising that her Majesty's preference for Windsor, Osborne, and Balmoral has only deepened with the passing of the years.

STATISTICS.

THERE are about 1,500 theatres in Europe. Italy possesses most.

NEARLY £500,000 worth of artificial flowers are sold in London yearly.

THE earnings of the average practising barrister do not exceed £300 a year.

IN the last three hundred years Great Britain has spent £1,857,000,000 in war.

THE proper distance between the eyes is the width of one eye.

GEMS.

SUCCESS always travels in the direction you are going; it cannot be met, but must always be overtaken.

LIFE is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood. All is a riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle. There are as many pillows of illusion as flakes in a snowstorm. We wake from one dream into another dream.

THE best part of one's life is the performance of one's daily duties. All higher motives, ideas, conceptions, sentiments in a man's life are of little value if they do not strengthen him for the better discharge of the duties which devolve upon him in the ordinary affairs of life.

THE years do not go from us, but we go from them, stepping from the old into the new, and always leaving behind us some baggage that is no longer serviceable on the march. Some keep our childhood, some our youth, and all have something of ours which they will give up for neither bribe nor prayer—the opinions cast away, the hopes that have had successors, and the follies outgrown, to be reviewed by memory, and be called up for evidence some day.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HONEY SANDWICHES.—Honey sandwiches are simply thin slices of bread spread with honey. Place two slices together, and cut into narrow strips, or stamp with a small cutter in the form of tiny stars.

FIG CAKE.—Cream one cupful of sugar with one-half cupful of butter; add one whole egg and the yolk of another beaten together, reserving the white for frosting. Beat well, add one scant cupful of milk, two cupfuls of flour sifted with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder and one-half teaspoonful of vanilla. Bake in two round tins or in a biscuit tin for twenty-five or thirty minutes.

BUNS.—Two cupfuls of light bread dough, one tablespoonful of butter, two tablespoonfuls of sugar, one-half cupful dried currants and a little powdered cinnamon. Mix the butter and sugar with the dough thoroughly. Let it rise until very light, then add the currants and cinnamon. Shape into biscuits; let them stand to rise. When light bake about twenty minutes. After the buns are taken from the oven, brush the tops with a teaspoonful of sugar dissolved in a little water or milk to give them a gloss.

RASPBERRY CHARLOTTE RUSSE.—To make raspberry charlotte russe, cover half an ounce of gelatine with a few spoonfuls of water, and soak for half an hour. Whip one pint of thoroughly chilled cream to a stiff froth, sweeten it with two tablespoonfuls of sugar, added gradually, and flavour with two tablespoonfuls of unsweetened raspberry juice; other flavourings may be substituted. Or use three tablespoonfuls of some delicate-flavoured, bright-hued jelly, crab-apple, quince or guava. When jelly is used the sugar may be dispensed with.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE town of Brux, Bohemia, is said to be sinking in a quicksand on which it is reported to be built.

THE Westminster clock, Big Ben, "reports itself" each day automatically at Greenwich, where a record is kept of its accuracy.

SOME reporters now take notes at night by the light of a tiny incandescent lamp attached to the waistcoat.

THE most extraordinary journal in the world is published weekly at Athens. Its contents are written entirely in verse, even to the advertisements.

HONEY ANTS have a peculiar custom. They form subterranean chambers for a home. A number of the tribe never leave this home. Their vocation in life is remarkable. They keep house. The working ants go abroad and seek honey. Returning home they feed this honey to the housekeeping ants and stuff them full of the saccharine matter. The housekeepers are the honey jars of the establishment, as it were.

It is often of importance to have plates or cards of transparent material. These can easily be made of gelatine by the following process: Place gelatine in cold water for several hours until it is thoroughly softened, taking care that no more water remains than is necessary to swell it completely. Prepare a plate of glass, carefully clean it, then coat with the slightest possible film of oil. Place around this glass a rim just as high as the thickness of the plate of gelatine is to be. Pour upon the prepared glass, which should be hot, the softened gelatine; then lay over it a second glass, heated and oiled, and press it gently down until it rests evenly on the top of the frame. This makes the thickness uniform, and if care is taken, there will be neither bubbles nor irregularities. When cool, remove the gelatine, which may then be cut or shaped into any desired form. By adding colouring matter any shade can be secured. Aniline is the best for tinting.

It is not generally understood that tuberculosis may be communicated from most domestic animals. It attacks, besides man, cattle, fowls, sheep, swine, cats, dogs, horses, rats, mice, and the vermin about the dwelling, and even insects, these latter having been known to spread the disease. The chief of the National Bureau of Animal Industry gives a brief summary upon tuberculosis, in the course of which he says: "The germ attacks only diseased or abraded tissue. There are cells within the body whose duty it is to fight disease germs. The germ may enter either by inhalation, inoculation or ingestion. Tuberculosis is more prevalent in old than in young cattle. It is not hereditary. The germ can be killed: (a) By a temperature of 158 degrees Fahrenheit for thirty minutes; (b) by direct sunlight; (c) by diffused sunlight. Its virulence depends on the numbers present. In breeding, poor health, poor ventilation, poor food, lack of sunlight, are important predisposing causes. There is no more, if as much, tuberculosis at the present time than in the past. Tuberculin, in competent hands, is a trustworthy and safe diagnostic agent. Tuberculosis is not a respecter of breeds. Communities have been furnished almost entirely with milk from tuberculous herds, without any appreciable increase in tuberculosis. Others have been furnished milk from healthy herds with no appreciable decrease in tuberculosis. Where fat calves have been inspected, even where a large proportion of their dams and nurses are tuberculous, only in from two to five in one hundred thousand has the disease been detected. 'The disease could be bred out of a herd by separating the infected animals and raising the healthy calves according to the Danish method recently described in scientific papers.' This is one of the most interesting topics now before the public, and the suppression of this dread disease demands all the combined force of science and the will of the people."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

HAZEL EYES.—The Latin for hazel is *castanea*.
TOMMY-TURVY.—It should be renewed every month.
FIRST BORN.—The brothers and sisters will all share alike.
LITTLE DORRIT.—We should advise you to stay at home.
TROUBLED.—You should consult an aurist without delay.
CHRISTMAS BOX.—Christmas Day, 1871, fell on a Monday.
A G.—You can get it at any waterproofing shop for a few pence.
ONE IN DISTRESS.—You had better consult a respectable solicitor.
D. T.—If you leave her you must provide a separate maintenance.
SCOTT.—It is so large that the best batsman cannot hit a ball without its limits.
ANXIOUS.—It is impossible to arrest the pension of a discharged soldier for debt.
STAR-MONK.—Step-children have no claim upon their step-parents for support.
DECEASED.—If he should molest her, let her seek redress at the hands of the magistrate.
RUPA.—We are not aware that the material you desire can be obtained anywhere.
DEAR.—You are not liable in any debts your wife may have contracted before marriage.
A. S. C.—If the will specifically leaves the property to the lady, it cannot be set aside.
RUFFY.—The interested parties would no doubt have the right to demand it if they chose to do so.
IGNORANCE.—In Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida." The lines are uttered by Troilus. See act II., scene 2.
MARTIN.—Place on top of fish when baking thin slices of salt pork; it will taste the fish, and the seasoning is lost.
ANXIOUS.—It will be time enough to be anxious about becoming an efficient operator when machines are being put down where you are employed.
BAR.—The architect is a purely theoretical individual, and you would not have the same advantage there except you began by learning practical masonry.
LOST.—It is next to impossible, excepting by advertisement, to discover the address of a stranger in America, unless you have something to trace him by.
M. T.—There must be two witnesses to a will. They must not be legatees or executors. They must sign in the presence of each other and in that of the testator.
H. R. R.—Hot vinegar and salt will clean copper. If washed off then with hot water and soap and polished with a dry flannel it will retain its brilliancy for a long time.
STAMMERER.—The cure consists in getting the speech so much under control as to be able to pull up the errant tongue when it is about to run away—to make a pause long enough to curb its excitement, and begin over again quietly.
M. A. P.—Mackerel is one of the most oily of fish, and the most difficult to digest, and should be entirely abstained from except by persons in the best of health. Whiting is the most wholesome and digestible fish, and next to that comes sole.
C. M.—French is the ceremonial or polite language at all the European Courts; even our own Mr. is but a corruption of the French Monsieur; the same style is used even in Russia and Greece, where even the alphabet is different from ours.
NAPPY.—A short afternoon nap is extremely beneficial, especially if the heaviest meal of the day is eaten at noon. A nap while digestion is in operation is natural and healthy, and rests the body, relieves the brain, and indulges and assists the digestive organs.
DISTRESS.—If you ask our advice we say in your case do nothing secretly. Better wait until the difficulties that at present stand in your way are overcome, even if it means five more years. No good would come from your getting married as you suggest.
LOVER'S QUARREL.—A sensible man will not be displeased at his betrothed's dancing sometimes with other persons to whom there can be no objection made; but on the other hand, a cautious, shrewd girl will avoid accepting the same individual as her frequent partner, for fear of arousing a jealous feeling.
ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—We cannot insert a speech such as you seem to want, as it would occupy too much space. Why not wait and say just what occurs to you when the time comes. Set speeches are not suited to such occasions, and all that would be expected of you would be a few congratulatory remarks which ought to be inspired by the happy event you are taking a part in.
PHILIP G.—If the pictures are faded entirely out in any part, it will probably be impossible to recover the likeness. If you are so fortunate as to have two pictures of the same person, a portrait might be made by copying both and putting them in the hands of a competent artist, who may be able to make up a very good likeness.

IMBECILE.—There are four forms of unsoundness of mind recognised by legal authority—idiotcy, dementia, mania, and monomania. Lawyers have disputed as to whether imbecility should or should not be included under the form of insanity, but with medical men the chief questions are relative to unsoundness; if unsound are there real lucid intervals? Is he fit to manage his affairs, to contract a marriage, or to execute a will? Is he dangerous to others? And before he can be put under restraint in an asylum the certificates of medical examiners must be obtained as well as the formal application of a relative or friend.

WHAT WOULD I DO FOR LOVE OF THEE?

What would I do for love of thee?
 You ask me, dear. I cannot tell;
 No love of mine may measured be;
 But I do love thee fond and well.
 A woman's love may not be weighed
 By petty silver nor by gold,
 No earthly power can define
 The utmost love her heart doth hold.
 What would I do for love of thee?
 Ask rather what I would not do!
 If love alone could content thee
 Then I would love thee fond and true.
 I would not die for love of thee—
 For little good would dying do,
 If just by living, I could be
 At once your comfort, love and true.
 But I would live for love of thee;
 Share all your sorrows, grief and strife,
 Contented just to live and be
 Your faithful friend and loving wife.

NAVY.—Utah was a "territory" within the United States in 1846, governed by the Central Authority without the "home rule" legislative principles of the States; it was the first created a State, and has now its own local parliament like the other States; Utah was acquired by the United States from Mexico as far back as 1848; the resources of the district were first developed by Brigham Young, the Mormon leader; a territorial government was formed in 1860, parts of Nevada, Wyoming, and Colorado being included in the jurisdiction; in 1868, however, the territory was reduced to Utah as now bounded, and shortly thereafter the Government took summary with the Mormons, their church corporation being dissolved and property confiscated being set aside as a permanent school fund.

EMIGRANTS.—It is essential that parties should be in good health and have a reasonable amount of personal luggage sufficient to show that they belong to the successful working classes; self-interest requires that they should have in addition to their luggage as much money as will keep them going for perhaps a month after landing until they obtain situations.

R. K.—A candidate for artificership in the Royal Navy must be able to read and write well, be acquainted with names and uses of various parts of a marine engine, understand the gauges, feed injectors, and blow-off cocks, know how to ascertain density and height of water in boilers, what to do with priming, how to regulate condensation water, what is necessary when water is in cylinders, and when a bearing heats, also how to deal with any casual accident.

MACON.—Soak the ham for twelve hours in plenty of cold water, then take it out and scrape it well; put it in a large saucepan covered with cold water; put on the lid, and let it boil gently for about three hours; a ham weighing twelve pounds takes three hours; if less weight it may take a little less time; if larger, a little more; let it cool in the water after it has boiled the necessary time, then take off the skin carefully; now take a sheet of paper and place over it; rub the paper with the hand, and take a fresh piece of paper and repeat; this smooths the ham and also absorbs the grease; this may be sprinkled over with rasplings of crust of bread or browned bread crumbs, or it may be painted over with glass as used for ox tongue, and decorated also with best butter; have a piece of ornamental frilled paper to twist round the knuckle.

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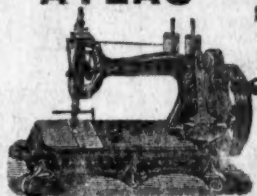
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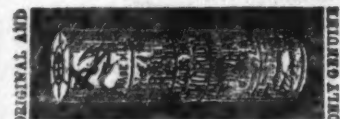
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